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A FLASH OF GOLD

FRANCES R. BELLAMY

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A FLASH OF GOLD

A
FLASH OF GOLD

BY

FRANCIS R. BELLAMY

AUTHOR OF
"THE BALANCE"

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1922

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First Edition

TO
MY MOTHER

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A FLASH OF GOLD

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CHAPTER I

In Which We Are Introduced to the Oldest Situation in the World but Meet Two New Actors

The first time Nancy ever saw David Carpenter was that week when Preck Addams' book, "Types of Women," came out. Sitting just below her he was, on the little stone balcony of the Clewesbury Country Club, his eyes on the dancers. And she leaned forward and tapped him lightly on the back of his head.

"Hello!" she said. "What type am I?"

And he looked up and smiled at her.

"Why, the attractive type, of course!" he replied.

"But you don't know me!" she objected. He had exceptionally clear blue eyes, she was thinking—and a curiously rugged face: like that picture of Cardinal Newman that hung in Preck Addams' house.

"I know you by hearsay," he replied.

"You're Doctor Carpenter, aren't you?" she asked.

"I am," he admitted.

She smiled mischievously.

"Do you know," she said, "I thought you would be very freaky and Herr Doktorial looking——"

"With long hair and a red tie," he interrupted.

A gleam of amusement shone in her eyes.

"Well," she hesitated, "people who uplift, you know——"

"It's an ill-natured word for good intentions," he replied.

She laid down her fan.

"I suppose that is true."

"May I have the next dance?" he inquired. "In an entirely friendly way?"

"You could cut in!" she said.

"I will," he answered.

And he did. He cut in. He danced with her five times. And then he took her home, exactly as if he had been Doug Everdell or Tuffy Warner.

That was the way she first met him. A moment of flirtation, a moment of conquest—and then that subtle duel of emotion she always loved. There was always an irresistible fascination for her, indeed, in a little flirtation. Like the mystery of dusk it was; like fresh, blowing winds on sunset waters; like the sweet sound of violins. A nod of the head, a catch of the breath, a tiny modulation in tone, and one was off for exquisite adventure! It was like carrying around a little theatre wherein one could choose one's part at any moment—and the drama began!

That was not a thing easily foresworn, no matter how much one was lectured, no matter what had happened to one's mother. She knew all about that, of course. Her mother had run away with Hempel, the 'cellist. She had heard that story a hundred times. Her earliest recollection of her father, was of him telling her that, and then sitting by the lamp after dinner, brooding, brooding—angered by the simplest of questions.

Why did you feel close to tears when the lamps on the street began to shine, and the motors hummed beneath the trees, so shiny and distinct against the

purple-black sky? Why was it that there seemed to be a sadness in the dusk? Was God weeping when the rain fell upon the bare, desolate autumn trees? Why did not Gaffney, the old street sweeper, have a garden of his own, if he so loved the flowers?

Those were the questions she had asked. And, "Rot! Like her mother talked!" Aunt Minnie had said.

And her father:

"Stick to the facts, Nancy," as he took up his paper again. "Don't pattern yourself after your mother!"

Like some undesirable, pursuing ghost, indeed, that figure of her vanished mother had seemed to hover over the house during her childhood—hiding in dark corners here and behind long curtains there, like the two genii giants who lurked in the big East Indian jars by the library door, ready to lean out and snatch you as you hurried upstairs in the dusk. A house filled with a shadow! That was what the Morpeth Terrace house had been, despite its blue-hung dining room with its view of the pergola, its rosewood music-room, its pottery-filled library with the dim, high fireplace.

She had felt it almost like the impact of a physical thing when she had come home from the boarding school overlooking Long Island Sound, and entered the Morpeth Terrace house only to have Aunt Minnie bring up the subject again. Why should she be like her mother because she enjoyed the dances at the Clewesbury Club and the Georgian, where the orchestra stopped at three and Doug Everdell played until four? Because she was crazy about the sailing parties at the Yacht Club where the boats lay lazily on the twilight waters, sails flapping idly, while gay, youthful voices were raised to the accompaniment of guitars and ukuleles? Because

she took a few motor rides to the Country Club or out to the lake shore under the June stars?

That was all she thought on that night when she first saw David on the little balcony and tapped him lightly on the back of the head. And yet there was always something different to her from the beginning about her relations with David—something she could not define. She had that same vivid desire to rouse his emotions that she had with other men. But behind that there was something else, something she could never analyze until the years taught her what it was.

Sincerity, garbed in humour—that was as close as she came to it in the beginning.

"Do you know David Carpenter?" she asked her bosom friend, Kitty Sassoon, as they toured the shops the next morning in search of a certain valuable green yarn.

"Oh, just to speak to," that Titian-haired beauty replied. "Isn't he the one who used to live on Fitzhugh Street with those two funny old maids? And has the crazy ideas?"

"I guess so," said Nancy.

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing," she answered.

Yes, he was that one, she told herself. But she did not propose to tell Kitty why she had asked. He might have crazy ideas. But she did not propose to tell any one about that curious feeling which he had given her last night. She had just meant to flirt with him a little, of course, when she had tapped him on the back of the head. That was why she had gotten him to take her home. But she had forgotten all about that, somehow, once they had reached the house on Morpeth Terrace and sought the nantucket under the pergola. He was the one who had conquered! He had started telling her

about a strange experience with a Polish family in a tenement on Grand Street—one of his Settlement experiences!—and of a sudden she had been filled with a desire to have him think she was nice! Not pretty or passionate or emotional—but simply nice.

Like a sudden gust of wind that had been, shaking her soul. She had forgotten flirtation completely. Remembrances of childhood had come to her instead—closing the garden gates on Baden Street lest old ladies injure themselves in the dusk; old Hank, the cat, who had lived there under the round-bellied stove in the parlour; the day she had buried her under the pear tree! Why, they had talked of childhood instead of flirtation! That had been the result.

She had felt herself almost a different person.

And she had let him go without knowing in the least what he really thought of her or if she would ever see him again! What could he have thought of her, indeed?

Three days she carried that interesting query unanswered.

And then she met him again—this time at the opening of the new buildings of the Brotherhood House. He was standing by a small stage at the end of the room, his arms folded, while he talked to an old lady in a black beaded dress. And she drifted over at once.

"Hello," she said.

"Why, hello, Miss Van Wyck," he said, extending his hand. "How do you happen to be here?"

"I thought I might see you," she said.

He thought it was irony until she blushed a little.

"Really," she said. "You made a great impression on me the other night. I wanted to see what you did down here."

"Well, do you like it?" he asked.

The old lady had vanished now, following with unwilling steps the vigorous lead of a large, energetic woman with an umbrella. Were they his aunts, she wondered?

"Very much—what I've seen," she said.

"What else would you like to see?" he inquired. He was looking down at her again with those pleasant blue eyes.

"Oh, all of it," she cried. "And where you live!"

"I'll be delighted," he said.

He showed her around rather slowly at first. The gymnasium and class rooms; the big auditorium where the open forum was held; the club and sewing rooms; the study with the fireplace; the shining white spick-and-span dispensary—he showed them all to her. And then he ended up on the winding stairs from the office where "Dr. Carpenter," done in gold on the door, looked out on the thin trees and red brick tenements of Kerrigan Street.

"This is my apartment," he said.

His apartment!

She stood in the doorway and took it in—the old Colonial windows, the plain board floor and plaster walls; the green-painted straight-backed chairs; the huge desk with the medical books and tobacco upon it; the white cheesecloth curtains—

And then she sat down on one of the straight-backed chairs, curiosity written large on her face.

"How did you ever happen to get into a Settlement?" she asked.

"Oh, mainly because Miss Haynes asked me, I suppose," he replied with a grin. "There is a certain charm in it, though, you know."

"What kind of people come here?" she asked. She was woefully ignorant, of course.

"Mostly children," he said. He took up one of

his pipes and began filling it. "Most people think I'm crazy, of course. But I couldn't quite see ending up another old Beau Fisher, with lilies in the window, and an invitation to the latest débutante's ball on the table."

"I'm a débutante, you know," she reminded him.

"I didn't mean you, of course," he said with a smile.

She snapped and unsnapped her bead bag.

"Well, I suppose it's time I was going," she said. "I'm very grateful. I'm glad I saw you again, too. I hope you'll come and see me some time."

She held out her hand and he took it.

"Would you really mind if I came and called?" he asked. "An ancient clamshell like me?"

"Why, I'd be delighted," she said.

"Then I will," he said. "Before you can regret the invitation!"

And he saw her to her electric with a slow courtesy that impressed her immensely.

Why, he liked her, she told herself as she drove slowly uptown, oblivious of the grimy buildings of Western Avenue, oblivious of the little groups of Negroes and Italians, of the green and brown saloons and stores with their faint Irish names quite overshadowed by the bright new lettering of Nikas and Stanislaus and Mirras.

He liked her!

Down the street rag pedlers and fruit vendors held forth between the old-clothes shops that filled the vistas of the brick tenements. From the filthy gutters sounded the shrill voices of dirty, rat-faced children, playing. Over all the scene were the unmistakable signs of Jewry and the sights and smells of southeastern Europe, as if by some magic that distant land had suddenly been transplanted here to these mid-eastern streets which once had known

ladies in black silk dresses, and little boys with round white collars, and all the decorous quiet of lawns and elms and old-fashioned, drowsy Sunday afternoons.

But Nancy saw nothing of that.

Yes, he liked her, she saw quite clearly—flirtation aside. But was that because he did not understand her in the least? Would he like her if he really knew her as she was?

CHAPTER II

Being Certain Incidents in David's Past with Which the Story Is Obliged to Reckon

There was never any doubt about that in David's mind, however. Like a breath of youth she was to him, a reincarnation of all that glamour he had known at nineteen, in the days of house parties at Ithaca, of football trips, of class banquets, of fraternity life. She had all the colour and warmth that had faded out of his life since he had put medical school and lower Fifth Avenue behind him, since he had left Fitzhugh Street and the City Hospital to go down on Kerrigan Street.

He knew that the moment he met her—at the same instant that he saw the irony of cultivating her acquaintance. David Carpenter of Kerrigan Street calling on Nancy Van Wyck! That had an ironical sound. What was the use of beginning a thing like that? No matter how attractive the girl was?

Just three years he had spent upon Kerrigan Street then. But they had made a difference already in his views on that aristocracy of achievement of which he and Preck had dreamed and talked—till the beer ran out—in New York. Art and Science to be followed with lifelong devotion, for the greater glory of mankind; letters and medicine to be practised, not for the money to be gained, but for the happiness to be enjoyed, the achievement to be piled up!

That had been the aristocracy of achievement of

which he and Preck had talked in those days in medical school when Preck had come down week-ends from New Haven, and he and Bat Robertson had gathered about them that crowd of gay spirits who visited Murray's and the Brevoort, and Little Hungary, where the little man led the orchestra so engagingly—or so one thought after four glasses of Tokay!

It had been the same in Clewesbury at first, too, once medical college was over and he had come ome to live with his aunts in the old-fashioned brick house on Fitzhugh Street. Apparently he had been only a young doctor—a doctor who did his stint as interne in the big City Hospital out Cuyahoga Avenue, and played tennis on the courts out under the trees much as other young doctors have done and will do, so long as doctors and hospitals exist.

But he had carried the dream inside him all the time. As soon as he had all his professional equipment, he would enter the road that led to the aristocracy of achievement. That had been the goal he had set for himself.

His chance had come finally, too, the day he got Miss Haynes' letter in the old-fashioned office in the ell of the Fitzhugh Street house. A very simple letter it had been:

DEAR DOCTOR CARPENTER:

We have at last secured the necessary money and we are going to have a real dispensary for the children at last. You are one of the ones who really knows what that means to us! We have needed it so badly in spite of the fine help you have always given us out at the City Hospital. No more hit or miss now! Isn't it splendid?

My letter isn't to sing a pæan of joy, however, It is to ask you if you won't consider taking charge of it for us. We have all grown to know you so well and to realize your exceptional fitness. Won't you do it?

I won't add another word. I know what Kerrigan Street

means. I have tried to tell you our vision in the few talks I have had with you. But I don't want to influence you in the least if you have other ambitions. But—— Just let me know that you will take it!

ELSA HAYNES.

A long time David sat with that letter, staring out at the sidewalks and chestnut trees of Fitzhugh Street, realizing the difference between dreaming a dream and making one come true. That was what the buildings of the Brotherhood House really represented, he knew. A dream made into reality by the indomitable will and vision of little Miss Haynes with her strong hands and humorous eyes! A dream pursued steadily and unflinchingly since boarding-school days, since the night when she persuaded St. Peter's congregation of their duty, and went to live in one room on Kerrigan Street. Twenty years of achievement!

And he himself had been out of medical school six years!

Wasn't it time, he asked himself, that he did something toward realizing that dream of which he and Preck had talked so lengthily?

A little daily string of patients, coming up the brick walk; his two industrial concerns; his practice at the City Hospital and the Brotherhood House—that told the whole story so far.

And he was no longer a boy. He had realized that the last time he had gone to New York. He had nearly fallen backward over the office furniture when Bat Robertson had appeared in the doorway of his office on Seventy-Second Street, dressed in a cutaway coat and wearing a flower and a beard! That was the same Bat Robertson who had played snap-the-whip up lower Fifth Avenue, and stolen the policeman's club from his hand! A decorous, important city physician. . . .

Even Preck had accomplished more than he had. Preck had finally gotten his "Types of Women" published, as his first step away from the office of the Clewesbury *Press* into the paths of literature—had done it, too, despite his flippancy and butterfly dancing on Congress Avenue.

But he had let himself drift. There had been no burden of poverty upon him, no vital necessity that called upon him to make money doctoring Fitzhugh Street and Congress Avenue. He had drifted into merely being a doctor, like every other doctor! He had not even tried for great surgery, for research, for the goal of a Pasteur, a Hahnemann, nor for anything!

Three days of rather ironical indecision he had spent over the thing. And then he had met Preck for luncheon at the Lotos Club.

"Hello, old dreamer," that aristocrat said in the pleasant dimness of the grill. "What's up?"

"An offer," said David.

He told him haltingly, while Preck scanned the regular lunch and called grandly for the wine card. Always difficult, indeed, to secure Preck's undivided attention after the publication of his "Types of Women." Ten thousand books a year, published by hopeful gentlemen along the Atlantic seaboard, but only one so far as Clewesbury society was concerned. It gave Congress Avenue quite an air, indeed. Why, Clewesbury had an author now! And not an obscure person, either, but one of the Preston Addamses. It showed how family would tell. . . .

The lionizing told a little as Preck leaned back and surveyed David over his cigarette, a tiny, petulant frown between his dark eyebrows.

"What do I think?" He hesitated. "Oh, it's only that they're such a rum crowd usually, these

social workers—longhairs and palefaces. I mean the regular ones. Not a drop of blood! Like old pussy-foot Musson with his St. Peter's and his 'my dear Mrs. Edmunds'!" He blew a cloud of smoke toward the beamed ceiling. "I think the old beggar takes a surreptitious handful of cigars after every meeting of the Executive Committee!"

"But you see, Preck," said David, "the trouble is that people come to me with their troubles. And I admit that I don't usually hear them—humanly speaking, I mean. I only see diagnosis, treatment, prescription. I can't see through the wall into the anteroom, where maybe the man has a wife and two children who will starve unless he gets well, unless maybe he keeps on working. I just say: rest, open air, and don't worry! Don't worry!

"It isn't irony, either. Maybe I've got fifteen people out in the anteroom. Out at the hospital last year we used to treat sick babies in the wards. It cost about twenty dollars each time we got one from Kerrigan Street. And I swear I saw the same kids month after month. They kept coming back because we couldn't do anything about the child's surroundings, the air it breathed, or the way its mother fed it. We would just gaily tell a lot of Polish women about modified milk and baths and fresh air. And probably they were poor devils who worked in sweatshops, and lived four in a room. No vision at all, you see—no knowledge of people's backgrounds.

"That's what Miss Haynes has. Just that knowledge. One ward treatment and a little knowledge of the patient's background, instead of five treatments and no knowledge! I would be simply opening a branch dispensary beside the Brotherhood House—a sort of joining of forces. A new kind of job, in a way: a social doctor. Do you see?"

Preck's eyebrows drew even closer.

"Oh, I see all right," he said. "But"—he ran his hand through his curly hair—"But it's so—well, it's like all your choices in college: so damned unromantic! Why on earth do you want to do it? For Heaven's sake, pick a little colour! Paris, Fifth Avenue, Johns Hopkins! Art, Literature, Science! For the love of Mike let some mucker with a pug-dog face give pills to Kerrigan Street!"

"While you and I, I suppose," David retorted, "pursue these arts out Congress Avenue, and in the Edmunds' drawing room, and such difficult places!"

"Has it got to be dirty to be real?" Preck demanded. "You old shell back!"

"We can't all be authors!" David responded satirically.

"For which, thank God!" Preck turned the subject with the deftness of long experience in duels of superficial wit. "Though I envy you the chance for material. There must be great stuff on Kerrigan Street."

It was the only point of view he ever had where David's work was concerned. . . .

To David himself, however, it had been curious how strong an appeal the thing had made once he had actually formulated it—as if in the purposeless drift of life some shining headland had loomed up out of the mist, a headland toward which he could steer the ship of his existence. He had pondered the thing while he thumped the chests and recorded the symptoms of his patients; while he attended the consultations and clinics out at the City Hospital; while he drove swiftly home through the twilight streets to the old house on Fitzhugh Street. Yes, a good thing, in the opinion of old Doctor Lodge of the City staff; a fine addition, in the opinion of blue-eyed Vera Vassilof, the self-contained, deep-bosomed visitor of the Brotherhood House; a necessary step in the view

of little Miss Haynes, with the wrinkles of humour around her eyes, and twenty years of calculated unselfishness behind her. Why did he not do it?

Three weeks he had spent over the thing and then early in May he had decided, and told his two aunts around the coal fire after supper. A queer, haunting fear that it might make them unhappy had kept him from telling them before. It was an obligation that only death could terminate, he felt; his obligation to these two fading ladies who had been mother and father to him all through his childhood, and who only waited now for old age to come to them in the house of steep stairs and high ceilings, of marble fireplaces and coal grates.

Still—he pointed out to them—it was not as if he were going away to some distant city. He would be able to see them every day, to be with them for many meals and the all-important Sunday dinner.

The silence that followed seemed almost brutal, broken as it was only by the click-clack of Aunt Susan's knitting needles.

"Humph!" sniffed Aunt Hat. Any fool could live in a tenement, that sniff said. Any fool could doctor them, too. Weren't any decent people ever sick? What did they want to enlarge the place for, anyhow?

"The neighbourhood," David explained. "Miss Haynes can't handle all the different classes with the present place. The work gets beyond them."

"And always will!" retorted Hat. There was no sense in this kind of thing, she was convinced. Hetty Edmunds and a lot of Congress Avenue people telling the poor how to live! She had known Hetty since the days when they shared their noon lunch at the private school where the Chamber of Commerce now stood. And society, not humanity, had always been her specialty. She hadn't changed because she had married Jonathan Edmunds and his fortune. There

was no end to doing other people's work, anyway. A lot of fool women these society women were. "I suppose Hetty aims to run the thing if they put it under the Federated Charities for the Chest Drive!" she added grimly.

"Not if Miss Haynes or I can help it," David grinned.

"What would you have to do with it?"

"Well, I would be more or less her assistant," he pointed out.

"And not just a doctor?"

"Not entirely."

"Humph," said Hat. There had always been this streak of softness in the Carpenters, she reflected. Her brother Walter, in New York, was the only one of the family who had always had good common sense. He had made something of himself, with a fine house off Fifth Avenue and a mahogany furnished office down on Broad Street. But David was more like his grandfather—apt to take people at their face value, impractical in his attitude toward existence. "I see," she said, as she bit off her thread sharply.

"But you won't give up your grandfather's office, will you?" Susan inquired.

"I'm afraid so," said David steadily. Only a matter of time, indeed, before he would have to give it up completely. It would do no good to pretend. "I couldn't do both, you see," he added.

"I suppose not," Susan replied. A curious rebellion against the relentless forces of existence flamed in her mild bosom for an instant. "I suppose it is best," she added. This was the end of something for the Carpenters, she knew. It was the end of Driving Associations, perhaps, and Female Charitable Associations and St. Luke's; yes, and this house on Fitzhugh Street. Only the faded carpets and

padded stairs and the crayon engravings would really remain once David and youth had gone forever.

This was not just a job he was taking, this time. Going down on Kerrigan Street would mean championing Kerrigan Street in the end. It always did, just as it had when Aunt Eleanor had gone to Richmond in eighteen sixty and David's grandfather had read her last letter about Abraham Lincoln around the stove in this same front parlour.

People believed only what it was to their own interest to believe, no matter how unconscious they were of it—and called it tradition. It was why changing people's ideas always meant struggle and tragedy, bitterness and heartbreak. Kerrigan Street would mean that in the end, because Kerrigan Street was not Congress Avenue, and the thirty blocks between separated them forever.

In the dispensary, the scene came back to David as if three years had not elapsed. Well, he had not been conscious of much of anything just then, he remembered, except his loneliness over leaving Fitzhugh Street. He had packed the books in his third-floor room the next day, indeed, and found it hard to disregard the emotion which caught at his throat. Why, this room held all he had known of childhood and youth, he had felt of a sudden. He and Preck had played with the blocks and the brownies here, in the sunlight on the yellow carpet. They had held the first great hospital here, too, amputating three of the dining-room chairs and the maltese cat's whiskers before Aunt Hat's carpet slipper had fallen on them in judgment. Even the executive meetings of the Fitzhugh Street Marching Club had been held here, and the gold-and-blue uniforms decided on! All the anguish of dressing for dancing school, the pride of changing short trousers for long ones, the solving of

the mystery of the dress-suit tie that only Aunt Susan could make look right—all that was in the vista of the years which these walls had looked down upon. He had felt all that. But he had not wondered if any Brotherhood House could ever make up for it! Or any aristocracy of achievement?

That realization had come later, as he had realized the slow steps toward achievement, and the distance of the goal.

A slow progression away from the friends of his youth, away from his own kind. That was what this thing was, he had realized gradually. He could see a change already in the way some of his old acquaintances treated him at the University Club luncheons, at the Chamber of Commerce meetings.

"What was there in it for him at the Brotherhood House? Good God, he wasn't going to be an uplifter, was he?"

That was a common question now during those evenings he still spent with Preck at the Lotos Club. He was not a Socialist, No!—a terrific indictment, he told Preck, but a doubtful remedy—but neither was he a Republican or a Democrat. Why not? That was a common question, too. And his answer that Andrew Van Wyck owned not only the Clewesbury Potteries but the Common Council as well usually brought an odd silence.

He would be about as popular with A. J. Van Wyck, indeed, as A. J. would be with his aunts. That was the truth of the matter. What was the use of falling in love with his daughter? With a girl who could never stand Kerrigan Street for an instant? Who would never dream of considering a life in this Brotherhood House?

In the white spick-and-span dispensary he faced that question for an instant, staring after Nancy's

swiftly moving electric down the motley street. And then he grinned.

What a typical human affair! Talk and argument, and much reviewing of reasons against—and then action just as if nothing had happened! Why, she was irresistibly attractive! Of course he was going to call! Where was the harm in that?

CHAPTER III

In Which We Are Afforded Some Side Lights on the Van Wycks and a View of an Inevitable Happening

He viewed the proceeding with a touch of doubt, nevertheless, as he drove up the elm-lined length of Congress Avenue three hours later and turned his motor in at the house on Morpeth Terrace, but with little question of what his two aunts would say to such an affair. At the name Van Wyck, indeed, there seemed to rise before Aunt Hat apparently only one picture—a stone mansion on Morpeth Terrace filled with bright new flowered furniture; a white-haired, cynical owner; and somewhere on a davenport a young girl just about to emerge from her clothes, holding a cigarette in each hand!

That was Hat's view of the Van Wycks. What was the use of bothering with such people when Clewesbury was full of others?

Even Aunt Susan held a similar view, although she went deeper. There was no achievement for her in the rise of Andrew Van Wyck from street labourer to boss of Clewesbury. He might have a garage full of fine cars. He might have Jonathan Edmunds and Herbert Pratt and all the rest of the Clewesbury Club—including the waiters!—to dinner. He might have a name even on Wall Street and head a new combination—was it in lake shipping, or was it in clothing?—with the help of his Man Friday, Forrester Stone. But there was no achieve-

ment in it to Aunt Susan. Just cynicism and materialism it was to her—with no touch of God in it. . . .

David realized that afresh as the maid led him into the library and he waited for Nancy to come down.

It was curious, he thought, that Susan could not see both the success and the pathos of the man. These Persian jars, these Chinese porcelains, these Egyptian blue glazes gleaming here in the darkness, these red Samian bowls and fantastic Peruvian vessels all staring at the jars and lamps and cups and bowls from the Clewesbury Potteries! Why, all the sweep of a life's endeavour was here: the white clay beds of Cornwall and Pennsylvania, the banked kilns and tall chimneys of Clewesbury and Ohio, the cheap crockery stores of the West with their ninety-nine-cent signs and their assorted china, the fashionable shops on Fifth Avenue with their tinted wonders on the shelves. For Van Wyck, all the work and sweat and hell of building the Clewesbury Potteries must be here, too, imprisoned in pottery—icy dawns in Kansas towns, with the transcontinental flier pounding across the prairie at four-thirty on her way to the Coast, the drummers asleep in the smoker; breathless, hot noons in the sample rooms of St. Louis and Chicago hotels, with the buyers wrangling over prices amid the heavy smoke of cigars; tense days at ceramic conventions in dirty Pittsburgh, fighting the trade, with all the sleepless nights that that meant!

Why, all that must be in this colourful library!

And yet, if rumour were true, Andrew Van Wyck sat here night after night, reading alone, trying to fill up the gaps in his life. "No man you couldn't buy! Every man out for himself! The only crime that of being found out!"

Those remarks of his in the Clewesbury Club be-

trayed the world he saw, the world he had made, the bitterness he had achieved. . . . Was that the world that Nancy saw, too?

The supposition struck David a little blow as he heard her footstep on the stairs and an instant later she came down the two steps to the library.

"Hi!" she said.

Why, like some picture of beauty and sweetness, she looked! Not a child of cynicism in a palace of shadows. It was odd how she had emerged so untouched, with such clear springs of humour and tenderness, unmuddied by the clay of her surroundings.

The contradiction held him strongly all through the beginning of the evening while the talk drifted—old Gaffney, the street cleaner; Clewesbury's streets and the motor traffic; the gossip about the midnight rides of the younger set; the infinite peace of the stars when one lay back in the seat and forgot the world; the stars as they appeared from the garden; the way the Baden Street garden must have appeared to Hank the cat (misnamed from the start, alas, and mother of dozens of kittens!); the cats of Kerrigan Street; the Brotherhood House——

That was the way the talk drifted, like thoughts in a day dream, touching reality here and there, but following no single pathway. Never afterward, indeed, could David single out any special subject, any special thing as leading to the unexpected climax of the evening. Just a slowly rising tide of emotion beneath the words they spoke, the things they did —an undercurrent that swept higher and higher in the pottery-filled library where the June breeze came softly through the open French windows. That was all.

Tiny spots of crimson came in Nancy's cheeks, a curious tenderness in her eyes—those might have been warning signs to a more disinterested ob-

server. But they passed unnoticed by David. What words are there, indeed, to indicate that magic which draws two people together for good or ill?

An odd breathlessness in David at ten o'clock—he remembered that because it was the hour at which Andrew Van Wyck came home to his library to read, and Nancy stood up swiftly when she heard the motor in the drive, and put her hand upon his arm.

"You don't want to talk politics with Father, do you?" she whispered.

Politics with Father! How many evenings had ended thus disastrously!

"Not if I can help it," he said.

His smile was intimacy; her laughter consent—as they crossed the grass toward the pergola in the moonlight. He always remembered that, too. So great a change in two hours! Did love sometimes forget her calendar of growth, of spring and fall and summer, and come in fullest blossom?

Why, she was perfectly sweet, he was telling himself as they settled on the nantucket. She was nothing like his aunts, nor Janet Addams nor Elise Edmunds, nor any one he had ever known. She was adorably different! She was like a princess in the garden of an ogre. The whole scene carried that idea. Like huge sentinels the poplar trees were, standing at the foot of the garden. Like the ogre's eye was the single lighted window of the library, where the orange lamp shone out upon the terrace. And out here beneath the pergola, the princess and her lover!

What tides of mystery there are, indeed, beneath the words we utter! A simple good-night phrase, said in soft tones, and a golden tide sets in toward a sunset coast, swirling sands of untold fortune. Two

lumps, please! And thrilling accent has crowded into a drawing-room commonplace more romance than ever strummed guitar beneath a Spanish casement.

"You're really very nice, you know," was all Nancy said—apropos of nothing in particular, it seemed!—as the peace of the summer night came to them and they fell thoughtful.

"It's very easy—to you," he said.

No humour in his tone, either!

"More so than to the others?" she asked.

Eternal feminine!

"There aren't any others," he answered.

"Oh," she said.

Thrilling silence—and youth!

Realization came to David. And he rose abruptly.

"This is madness," he said to himself.

But,

"Please don't go yet," said Nancy. "It's early."

And she put her hand upon his arm as he stood beside her.

Fatal gesture!

"Oh, I don't know," he said irresolutely.

But she knew what he meant perfectly.

"Don't go!" she said. Utterly without that self-control that comes from self-denial she was. All passionate tenderness was her voice.

"This is idiocy," he said.

But he sat down again. His arm had touched her waist, too, somehow.

"It's sweet," she said.

And her hand tightened upon his.

"You're wonderful," he said. And he took her in his arms.

"I wanted you to kiss me the first time I saw you," she whispered.

Moment of mystery, hour of wonder! Never forgotten. . . .

CHAPTER IV

In Which We Catch a Glimpse of a Perfect Hour and Andrew Van Wyck Loses a Daughter

Afterward, indeed, it always seemed to Nancy and David as if that first summer must have had wings. It seemed hardly a moment before winter had come and David was telling his aunts about his engagement; and the perfect hour was over.

That was what they called it: the perfect hour. Across the world at Charing Cross love said good-bye forever, for it was the autumn of nineteen fourteen. At the Gare du Nord happiness strained its eyes after the departing beloved. Even in the Wilhelmstrasse tears and sad premonition caught at the throat of pride. But in Clewesbury David and Nancy needed only to wait for dusk and the last patient to go, and then love awaited them in the stone mansion out Congress Avenue.

Yes, Nancy was telling herself, she might be like her mother, but there would never be any one like David. He was enthralling; she would die unless she could marry him; she did not care if she never saw another man as long as she lived! It made no difference how she felt about flirtation. It made no difference if there were imps of conquest hidden within her. There was no use in telling him just how she had felt! She did not feel that way any longer!

That was what Nancy was telling herself.

And yes, David was informing his conscience, he might be highly unpopular with Andrew Van Wyck

but it was his daughter he meant to marry; love was the only thing worth while in any marriage that was worth the name; Kerrigan Street might be a progression away from one's friends but it need not be so for Nancy; anything would be better for her than the loneliness of the house on Morpeth Terrace; she was wonderful—and he would make her happy!

That was the way the summer fled for both of them. Evenings up on the roof garden of the Pontiac when they danced together while beneath the balustrade Clewesbury stretched like a city of dreams; afternoons down by the lake shore where they motored to some secluded, wooded point to enjoy an hour reading "The Golden Age"; nights out at the Country Club where they dined beneath the whispering trees and then sought the Chinese Pagoda downtown, while Preck and Kitty Sassoon and the rest of the younger set looked on with amusement and perhaps a touch of envy.

It was November, indeed, before David told his aunts, at one of those Sunday dinners which had marked the gatherings of the Carpenters on Fitzhugh Street from time immemorial.

"I'm not surprised," Aunt Hat remarked in her teacup. She had prophesied the thing to Susan, indeed, since the first evening when they had seen David with the girl at the Edmunds' reception, and got a view of her dull green dress and her manners!

"But she's wonderful, Aunt Hat, really," David told her. "You'll be crazy about her when you know her," he added.

"No doubt," Hat retorted. "Her father, too, I suppose. What does she talk about—pots?"

"Hat!" said Susan.

She sounded only mildly reproving. But Hat turned on her instantly.

"Can't I ask the boy?" she demanded.

An endless feud, indeed, between his two aunts, was this question of how he should be handled—and dating from dim days he could not remember. He might be thirty-two and head physician of the Brotherhood House, but Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan were still bringing him up.

"She's really adorable," he said warmly.

"Like her mother before her, I suppose," Hat grunted instantly.

"She is pretty, I think," admitted Susan.

"Pretty?" It was a vigorous eye that Hat fixed on her sister.

"Well, for that kind, I mean," Susan amended at once.

"You can go call on the old man," said Hat, "if you like the match!"

"I daresay," Susan replied.

Someone would have to go call, she knew, if the social amenities were to be preserved. And it would not be Hat. Hat never budged if she did not want to. She simply held to her own ideas and battered into submission every subject that any one brought into the house. She did not seem to understand in the least how futile such a course was with David.

David saw only what he wanted to see. He had been the same when he was a little boy, when he had spent that summer trying to train Golmar the turtle to harness. It apparently had never made the slightest difference to him that the turtle did not give the least sign that he felt the tug of the reins. Oh, no, he had told her. Golmar had really stayed a very short while to learn to drive in harness. In time Golmar would undoubtedly have been the best turtle in harness in the civilized world. Merely "in time!"

It had been the same, too, when Dan Sullivan had

tried to arrest Tony the pedler because he had no license, and Tony had drawn his dagger. It had been an irresistible impulse in the youthful David to squirm through the crowd and clutch Tony's arm, unmindful of the hate in the Sicilian's eyes. No, Tony, his friend of the summer hours on the back porch was preparing to fight because he did not understand. That was all. Tony was all right!

Hat had slippered him for that—for disobeying her and giving her a shock. But the thing had been only the first striding of idealism across his childish existence—idealism, with its belief in people, its possibilities of deeds and anguish, of tragedy and failure, and yet of great victory as well.

He looked at this Nancy Van Wyck in the same way now. He had merely grown up and fallen in love. And Hat's methods would get nowhere with him. Tony had turned out all right in the end, too, and gone smiling down Fitzhugh Street with Dan Sullivan. It was possible that David's marriage even with a girl like this Nancy would end well. People did not change, in any case. Nor did youth marry with a volume of philosophy in its hand. It was better to say nothing—and hope for the best. . . .

"When are you going to be married?" she asked.

"I suppose that depends somewhat on Mr. Van Wyck," said David.

"And not at all on Susan and me, I see," Hat said abruptly.

Well, the Carpenters always made fools of themselves when they married, she thought as she climbed the stairs that evening. She put the silver teapot under the bed with the thought. . . .

There was no apprehension in David, however, that he was doing anything foolish.

Only the failure of Nancy to tell her father worried

him at first. She could not avoid that forever, he knew. Why did she not make up her mind once for all and take the plunge?

He never knew how Nancy dreaded that interview. There was a double dread in her mind: her father and herself. Yes, engagement was wonderful, thrilling! But it seemed so final, somehow, to tell her father. He would be so sarcastic, so unpleasant, the moment she began to tell him what was in her mind. Wasn't it possible to put it off just a day or so longer?

That was why she delayed the thing so long, unaware of the tide of anger which was rising in Andrew Van Wyck as he sat in the library at night listening to the voices in the drawing room or came home late from the club and saw by the lamplight that his daughter was still up.

It was a sort of dull rage, indeed, that was taking possession of him during those evenings, a rage that came because of his dim realization that she was going farther with this man than she had with any of the others. There was a limit to what she could do on Morpeth Terrace.

He decided that toward the beginning of the third week as he waited grimly for David to go home and then followed Nancy heavily up the stairs toward the blue bedroom, still holding a copy of the *Pottery Magazine* in his hand.

She had just shaken out her dark hair as he entered. And he bit his cigar and spat the piece on the blue carpet, resolved to keep cool. She had that emotional look to-night.

"Nan," he said deliberately, "this has got to stop."

She turned around swiftly, her hands on her neck.

"What has?" she asked.

He clenched the magazine a little tighter.

"This flirtation stuff!" he said steadily. "There's only one name for the sort of woman you'll be if you go on!"

He took his cigar out of his mouth.

"Don't you suppose I know what you're doing? Don't you suppose I've ever seen a woman make a fool of herself? What in God's name are you thinking of to go on like this?"

Her hands dropped, and she sat down at the dressing table, her eyes on her knees.

"This is different," she said softly.

He stared at her for a moment and then sat down.

"Well, what's the difference?" he inquired. There was no use taking up anything with her unless you took it up thoroughly. It took an hour to get anywhere—with her mind!

"Why, the difference is," she said, "that I'm going to marry David."

It took Mr. Van Wyck almost a minute to digest that. And then he indulged in a satirical chuckle.

"Do you expect me to believe that?" he asked.

"It's true," she told him. "I'm going to marry him in December."

Going to marry! That fact struck through Mr. Van Wyck's cynicism like a dagger. Why, marriage wasn't flirtation. She couldn't mean marriage. Perhaps——

He gripped himself tightly where he sat on the chair, and refused to be stampeded.

"Going to marry him before you get sick of him, eh?" he inquired sarcastically.

"Perhaps," Nancy replied. A tiny spot of colour crept back in each cheek with her admission, as if to warn her to say no more.

"Are you serious?" Andrew Van Wyck inquired.

"Quite," she answered as she turned to her mirror and began doing her hair.

She had combed it and begun her braid before her father spoke again.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said.

She turned on him quite hotly.

"I don't see why you say that," she cried.

"Because I don't think you know what you're doing," he told her angrily. "Because I think you're getting into one more mess. Because I think you're following your own sweet will—and ignoring the consequences. Isn't that enough?"

"I suppose you're going to live on Kerrigan Street!" he added.

"I guess so," she admitted.

The curious mixture of affection and irritation that she always called forth rolled mountain high in Andrew Van Wyck.

"Well, I won't let you," he said harshly. "You'll listen to me before you throw away your life. You're piling up real trouble for yourself this time. You're not made for this God Almighty upliftin' stuff. You won't stand it six months. It's mighty different living on Kerrigan Street from just going down there and coming back here at night. By God, I know! I've spent my life getting out of places like Kerrigan Street. It's no place for a woman like you. If you've got to marry, don't marry there. Do you see?"

He bit his cigar again as she did not answer, sudden conviction in him that she wouldn't see. No, water and sand! That was her. You could talk until hell froze over—and it had no effect on her intentions, once her desires were roused. She just used talk to obscure facts. How she must put it over this Carpenter!

"Don't Carpenter see that?" he inquired abruptly.

"David loves me," she said.

"For yourself alone, eh?"

"Yes."

In the silence, Andrew Van Wyck doubted it.

"Does he know that that is all he'll get out of it?" he inquired grimly.

For the first time Nancy smiled.

"He isn't marrying me for money," she said.

"Because he won't get it, if he is," Van Wyck stated.

"Meaning you won't give me anything?" she asked him directly.

"Not even the cost of a wedding," he replied.

"Just why?"

"So he can appreciate just you alone," he said grimly.

If the fellow was taking advantage of her passions, indeed, in hopes of getting the Van Wyck money—why, he had another guess coming, he told himself as he closed the door of his own room. All these fellows came to money in the end, particularly as they got older. And this man was over thirty. This would bring the thing out in the open. . . .

It did accomplish that, too. It brought David to the Van Wyck building the next afternoon, in his mind an impression that he had been letting Nancy carry the burden of their engagement, somehow—and that she had mismanaged it.

It was a cool enough interview that followed. He was biting off more than he could chew, Van Wyck told David—and he did not consider his daughter old enough to marry nor of the temperament that should marry without being more positive than she was about this affair. The man she married should be able to hold her for a year without seeing her at all. He might be disposed to call that love. Otherwise, love was only the name fools gave to desire. And Nancy had plenty of that—and would be better off without gratifying it. She could never live on

Kerrigan Street, anyway, and he didn't propose to support the man she married in idleness. So that disposed of that.

If David knew all these things and considered them, and still wanted to marry Nancy, why—he could only say that he couldn't stop him, and that he wouldn't interfere. Each man's life was his own. Each woman's, too. David could shoulder the responsibility he had carried for some twenty years—if he insisted. But as for him, he washed his hands of the whole thing.

And he would never advance one cent. . . .

"The old man is all right, though," David told Nancy that night. "He's only worried, I think, because he doesn't know how you are going to stand living on Kerrigan Street. And he's really fond of you, way inside."

"Maybe," Nancy said inscrutably.

"Do you think you will like it?" he asked.

"Oh, Dave!" she remonstrated. "What difference does that make to us?"

It didn't make any difference where you lived, indeed—that wasn't the doubtful question in marriage. The real question was: how did you feel about "forever and ever"? Wasn't that the real question?

"Did he tell you he wouldn't give me any money?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," David answered.

"What did you say?"

"I?" he repeated. "Why, I guess I didn't say anything—as I remember."

"You're a dear," she told him impulsively.

And she kissed him swiftly, rather to his astonishment. . . .

That was almost all there was to the engagement of David and Nancy. One rather dreadful dinner

on Fitzhugh Street, where Hat ate stolidly all through the meal; two gay, youthful parties by Preck and Kitty Sassoon; and a final refusal by Andrew Van Wyck to Aunt Minnie's request that they do something in the way of recognition—and the festivities were over.

Even all gossip had vanished completely long before the afternoon when Nancy came down the broad stairs of the Morpeth Terrace house, dressed in her light gray travelling dress, and sought David's arms rather tremulously in the library. They would be alone in a few hours, and she would be his. That was what these wedding presents, the silent house, the waiting taxicab outside said to her as she fixed her veil for the last time in the hall. She was leaving Morpeth Terrace forever . . . despite her father's objections.

She did not look around even once, indeed, as the taxi bore her and David past the corner into Congress Avenue, out of sight of the garden and the pergola and the tall, brushlike poplars, down through the traffic to the gray bulk of St. Peter's. They would be married in a minute was all the ticking chronometer of the cab said, all the curious passersby meant, all the Reverend Doctor Musson apparently said in his room before he left them to go to the chancel.

Her father was there to give her away, she noticed breathlessly, as they came down the aisle, and Miss Harriet Carpenter had apparently come, while Aunt Minnie was weeping, curiously enough, in the last pew on the end.

The rest was always a blur, afterward, filled with odd tag ends—David putting the ring on her finger; the intense green of the palms by the chancel; the granite silence of her father; the curious, meaningless patter of the ceremony; and then the queer, con-

strained gathering afterward in the church, the music sounding faintly while Aunt Minnie, and Kitty Sassoon, and Preck Addams, and Miss Susan Carpenter, with a mist in their eyes, all talked at once—and her father stood by the door.

"Good-bye, Nan," was all he said in the end, with a queer fixed look in his eyes. "Remember, I'm your father."

He was still standing on the steps outside, she always remembered, waiting for William and his motor, his eyes fixed on their disappearing car as they turned the corner and went down the street toward the station.

CHAPTER V

In Which Nancy Begins the Great Adventure and a Bluebird Comes Visiting Kerrigan Street

Passion and tenderness, sunshine and dusk, and all the wonder of losing her own identity in David —that, and the strange sensation, paradoxically enough, of being absolutely her own mistress: those were the overtopping emotions of the honeymoon days to Nancy. She was wonderfully happy through all those pleasant evenings filled with theatre-going and opera, with suppers at the Blackstone and the La Salle, with always their own rooms to go to afterward, the glittering lights of Michigan Avenue stretching along the silent lakeshore beneath their windows, back of them the cheerful wood fire, and outside the huge mass of endless Chicago.

Three weeks they had of that.

And then they came home in the rain—gray downpour misting the windows of their Pullman in the deserted Union Station; turning black with wet the sidewalks along the steep streets that led to the Square; giving odd, twisted effects to the glimpses they caught through the taxicab windows of hurrying, umbrella-covered crowds.

Rain. . . .

It gave an odd, guilty feeling to David, somehow, as they turned into Kerrigan Street with its pools and rivers of wet, and he looked at the dark, watery expanse of playground and the white pillars of the

Brotherhood House gleaming with rain. No, he had not given this street of despondency and hard gaiety a thought since he and Nancy had left. He had not even conjured up the face of Miss Haynes, or of Vera Vassiloff, or any of the little group that sometimes sat about the fire in the bare study.

He faced the fire upstairs, indeed, unaware of the tiny dismay which had crept into Nancy's heart at the sight of the daintily furnished Colonial living room with its simple chairs and plain rugs which, with the bedroom and bath on one side and the dining room and kitchenette on the other, made up the apartment where they were now to live.

"It's great to be back, Nan, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes," she said dubiously.

"Yes, but!" David teased her. "But it isn't the Blackstone, or the honeymoon!"

"I liked the honeymoon," she admitted whimsically.

"So did I!" Tenderness came into his eyes. "We'll have the continuation here, though in a little different way. What do you say?"

"I don't want any change," she said.

"Then we won't have any," he said promptly. "We'll just add a little work on Kerrigan Street. That's all!"

It was not going to be the same, nevertheless, Nancy decided as she watched him pick his way across the yard to the brick building where his study was, and then turned away from the window and looked at the room. It was going to be different—quite different. She would not be able to have all his time now. She would have her own existence to consider again. Love could not be everything now. She would have an apartment and meals and marriage to consider.

It was a curiously different life to which she was

returning, too, compared to the one she had left; even though it contained almost the same people and was bounded by the same limits of Clewesbury and its streets and theatres and drives. This small apartment now, instead of the blue-and-gold room overlooking the garden and the pergola on Morpeth Terrace. This tiny kitchen, where she would get their breakfasts every morning, instead of the big, blue-hung dining room where she could come down in negligée and gaze pleasantly out over the pergola while Maggie brought in the coffee and rolls. How was she really going to like Kerrigan Street?

Before the first week was over, however, she confessed to a liking for it. The apartment was her own, somehow; and she could do what she liked with it. She could change the furniture in the living room into different positions every day in the week, if she liked!

And the whole place, Kerrigan Street and all, was so different—so almost foreign, like some distant land. It was like going out on a tiny adventure every morning, to go out shopping, looking at vegetables on the funny carts, tickling the cats at the butcher's and grocer's where everyone seemed to smile a welcome at her when she came in. Much more fun than sitting in the big library on Morpeth Terrace with everything on the street obscured by the high shrubbery.

And when she was tired at night, she and David could seek out so many queer little restaurants that she was sure Kitty Sassoon never knew existed. There was an air of Bohemian romance over the whole place. You could never tell what any one was going to say! Kerrigan Street was like living in a mystery. You heard such odd snatches of conversation now and then as people stopped by the win-

dows at night, or raised their voices a little, back at the table in the corner of some Italian restaurant. The whole place might turn into a Moorish city or—well, or anything, at any minute! And you were certain that Congress Avenue would never turn into anything—except maybe the downtown district.

"Why, I just love it down here," she told David rapturously, after the first few weeks.

"Well, I'm glad of that," he smiled. "We'll try it a little longer then?"

"At least a month!" she said gaily. It was one of their jokes, then, to pretend that the whole thing was only an experiment, that either one of them might decide any day that the marriage was over

It *was* a sort of adventure, she decided, by the time winter had come in good earnest and dirty gray snow filled the sides of the street, marked here and there by frozen-in ashbarrels.

She went to see her father as soon as she decently could, not impelled by any particular desire but conscience stricken of a sudden that twenty years of companionship had left them with so little in common. And then all the pleasant parties of youthful married life came to her—little dinner parties followed by bridge or the movies down at the Rialto, or sometimes just by engaging talk around the wood fire in the apartment. Aunt Hat and Susan came and made her nervous over the way she had the dinner served—little Maria was willing but not trained!—and talked before the fire and went home, Hat staring with silent disapproval at the tiny kitchenette. Preck and Kitty Sassoon came; and Janet and Kenny Watson; and even Mr. and Mrs. Edmunds, just as a lark. Yes, Mr. Edmunds had known David's grandfather, he told them, when Congress Avenue was crowded with sleighs every Sunday winter afternoon. . . .

She joined the Babies' Aid Society, too, and spent long, pleasant afternoons sewing and talking at the different houses of the youthful members while they had tea and otherwise imitated their elders in dispensing fashionable charity. She even tried herself out, once or twice, to see if her old imps of conquest still had any influence over her. And found, to her satisfaction, that they did not. She did not even mind being ignored by Jack Walton or any of the younger men at the tennis club dance, nor being left to stand in the Kerrigan Street car, on those afternoons when David had been called after office hours and she did not have the machine.

Perhaps love and marriage did give one a kind of armour against desire, after all! Perhaps that was the recompense for being an old married woman. You got such a different view of existence, too, when you were married. Life opened out just as much as it did when you became a débutante on Congress Avenue. Marriage seemed to give you a sort of place in society. You were no longer just Nancy Van Wyck—you were "the Carpenters." And the Brotherhood House gave a view of existence so different from the garden on Morpeth Terrace.

There was even a kind of thrill in listening to the queer people David brought home with him. Not even Preck had the strange, colourful flow of language that Anton Fechter had, for instance, when he began talking about the whitewashed village in the Carpathians from which he had come as a child—or when he described his years in the mills in Moscow, his work in the sweatshops of lower New York, or the afternoon when he came home and found David bending over his only child on the bed. His voice always trembled when he told her that. It was a true friend, he assured her, who had taken his boy from the car tracks and called the ambulance and brought him

home with those splints on his poor, thin, little leg—no thicker, by the beard of Abraham! no thicker than a stick!

A much bigger man than people imagined—the doctor!

That was what Anton Fechter said. . . .

She watched David with curious eyes after that, as he went deeper and deeper into his work and the stream of Clewesbury's childhood flowed through his office. He had never told her anything about that affair. Were there other sides to him that she did not know anything about?

She devoted herself to discovering them then as the winter spent itself, drawing out little Anzia Lublin in David's study, as the Polish girl typed his letters; questioning Vera Vassiloff as that lady went out mornings with a cheerful smile on her freckled face and a sheaf of report cards in her pocket—even becoming confidential with little, gray-haired Miss Haynes.

She derived a peculiar pride in her husband from those adventures in curiosity. Yes, David was the salt of the earth, Miss Haynes told her. An excellent doctor, a real child specialist, if Kerrigan Street only knew it, Doctor Dunstan informed her. And the only real American she had ever known who didn't consider himself superior, so Anzia Lublin let slip in the pauses of typewriting. Though surely he didn't consider Kerrigan Street the place to come to bring up his own children, did he?

It was this last question which induced the most confusion in Nancy. A kind of tacit agreement between her and David that children weren't to be mentioned. There would be time for children after one had been married a while, when one was the age of the older married set who were beginning to have babies now that they had their own houses and were

settled. But surely David didn't consider bringing up their children—when they did have them!—in any place like Kerrigan Street? What sort of youth could they have here in this filthy street of tenements and ignorance and vulgarity, with never a breath of country air, nor a sight of—of America? A sweet little baby couldn't be brought up here. Who could it play with? Or know when it grew up? Even if it lived! Why, no nice American child could be brought up here!

"You know, we would have to move away," she told David that night at dinner.

"Like the rest of America," David answered.

"Oh, I know," she said. "But, Dave, we couldn't have *our* children here."

"That seems to be just the difficulty," he agreed with her. "Slums are only for other people's children."

That was the reason for the Brotherhood House, she figured out finally—and her opinion of David's work rose appreciably. How odd it was that such things didn't seem to mean much during engagement! And yet how plain they were, when one came in contact with them. Miss Haynes and Mrs. Edmunds and all the women and men who had carried on and contributed to this Brotherhood House must have seen all this years ago. Did the Babies' Aid Society really realize it?

She spent one afternoon trying to tell them about it—and then gave up in despair after quoting David wrongly and not being able to remember two or three of the most important arguments. No, she decided, she had better let David tell people about the Brotherhood House, while she tried the Fifteen Swift and Simple Recipes for Luncheon that Aunt Hat had given her at one of the Sunday dinners. Perhaps David did look badly fed. . . .

"You'd have a very dull and uncomfortable life without me, though, wouldn't you?" she demanded of him. "No excitements, or funny evenings, or—or anything except poverty! Wouldn't you?"

"I wouldn't consider existence without you," he told her, with satisfactory accompaniments.

That was their understanding through all the evenings of the winter, as Nancy's adventures in curiosity finally reduced themselves to plain demands upon David for all known facts.

"But how did you get the confidence of the people down here so they would come to you?" she insisted finally, after he had told her that he had done—only the ordinary things!

"They were already in the habit of coming here," he pointed out.

"I know," she remonstrated. "But that doesn't tell me anything. What did you do when you came down here—what gave them the idea you could cut people up, or cure them—or be any, any good?"

He laughed a little at that.

"Because they didn't die, I suppose," he said.

"But didn't anything exciting happen to you?" she insisted.

"Something dramatic, you mean," he remarked meanly.

"Yes!"

He searched his mind slowly, while he drew on his pipe.

"Well, Zalinsky's wife was dramatic, I suppose," he said finally.

"Oh, what was that?"

"Appendicitis," he explained.

"But, Davie, Davie——" She pummelled him angrily. "You tell me, and stop all this waiting."

"Well, she had it, and I knew it—and I doubted if she'd last till I could get her to the hospital. And

Zalinsky came in just as I got her—we had the general ambulance—to the door. He was drunk, and——"

"Yes!"

"Well, he wouldn't consent to her going. So I had to make him."

"But what did you do, Dave?" she demanded, in a kind of agony of suspense.

"Why, I—I knocked him down," he said. "There wasn't time to go get a policeman, you see. I suppose Zalinsky could have had me jailed. But I had operated on the wife by that time. And she was all right. Of course, he was drunk—that takes away all the glory."

"Not at all," she remonstrated. "He could have pulled out a pistol!"

"And missed."

"He'd have hit!" Nancy stated with great decisiveness. "You were a hero!"

"From the beginning," he admitted.

"I won't ever ask you again!" she said in high dudgeon.

"Which is something," he told her.

And they both laughed. . . .

Ah, if only David could have knocked down a poor drunken foreigner every night and so remained a magnificent hero! Or if Nancy and he could have moved on, forever, like modern gypsies, from one new romance of Kerrigan Street to another—without allowing the hour of newness ever to fade or the imps of conquest to overtake them!

Well, then, this particular story would never have been written, of course.

And yet Nancy was not wondering about marriage particularly in those days of the early spring. Its success or failure was holding out no interesting

problem to her. She was only living happily from day to day with David.

She did not even realize that spring itself was at hand, so dim and delicate was the gray-green tracery on the few trees of Kerrigan Street, and so busy were her days. Spring might have come, indeed, and trembled through the awakening days into gorgeous summer without her knowing it, had it not been for the visitor she had in the kitchen.

But never after that!

Just a stray bluebird he was, flirting and ruffling his feathers on the window sill. A saucy little bluebird who stared at her with audacious impertinence, and cocked his head on one side, and sped nimbly to the other end of the sill and cocked his bright eye once again at her. A bluebird on Kerrigan Street!

Straight from childhood and out of the past he might have come for the gray-eyed girl who watched him, bringing her pictures of Gaffney, the street sweeper and bright spring days in the garden, of Maggie and the kittens, of Hank and the idyll of childhood in the big stone house on Morpeth Terrace.

A bluebird on Kerrigan Street!

In the garden just off Congress Avenue green little shoots must be tipping the cedars and pines; the crocus must be taking a peek at the pergola, all dingy and a little stained after the winter. Perhaps the grass was beginning to show a soft sheen, and the earth was all piquant; and everywhere in the garden fresh perfumes of growing things were blowing through the shrubbery and along the paths. . . .

And she was on Kerrigan Street, where the delicate gray tracery of the trees against the red brick tenements of Franklin Park was the only sign that another summer was at hand!

"Let's take just the afternoon off!" she tempted David at lunch in the apartment. "It's a heavenly

day—we're just missing every one of those fleecy clouds!"

"But it's my tonsil clinic, at two, Nan," he told her. "I can't possibly go!"

"But you never can go!" she pointed out petulantly.

He spread out his hands.

"I'm a doctor," he said.

"You're a husband, too!" she retorted. "Or are supposed to be!"

"That's the trouble with the doctor's existence," he remarked.

"I've just got to get out of here—out of every place!" she declared passionately.

"Why, go, Nan," he told her at once. "I didn't mean that you should mope around here just because I can't get out with you!"

"I'll just have to!" she answered. "As soon as you're out of the house!"

It was the way she had felt at boarding school, she told herself, as she dressed in front of the mirror a few minutes later. Exactly the way she had felt when the gray February days had stretched on and on—and then suddenly the bright winter sun had come out on the whole brilliant stretch of the hills and the winter woods and the snow-swept river and fields! She had had to get out—get out into the fields or the deep forest paths, or down into New York into the glittering length of Fifth Avenue, with its beautiful windows, its procession of piquant faces and magnificent furs, its shining motor cars and illuminated dusk. . . .

She had felt herself part of the winter sunshine then; and now, to-day, she felt herself part of the soft spring breeze, part of the whole glorious afternoon.

Just to smell the garden once more, and bury her face in the new, shiny leaves of the maples—and for-

get all the dun ugliness of the sidewalks and pavements, the cobbles and tenements, the railroad tracks and the scarred, grimy factories.

She put on the saucy mink furs she always wore when there was any chance of chill in the air—and descended the stairs with swift little steps.

" May I take the car?" she asked David where he washed the little heap of shining instruments in a corner of his white spick-and-span office.

"I won't need it," he nodded.

She was out on the sidewalk, and pressing the starter then, almost before he had turned away. A second later, she was threading her way through the heavy trucks and carts which impeded Kerrigan Street at that hour. No question about the arrival of spring, indeed, she noticed as she sped over the bridge at Pollock's bar. In little puddles, the last of the spring rains lay drying in the warm May sun, and a mile to the north the blue lake seemed almost to have a haze about it. On the sidewalks everywhere games of marbles were in progress, groups of embattled rivals disputing the relative values of agates and mibs. A real arched avenue of green, too, Congress Avenue was—stretching as far as the eye could reach—and everywhere the bright colours of women's clothes. . . .

"Ahoy, Nan!"

She caught the name amid the swiftly moving traffic in front of the Addams building, and drew up to the curb deftly, between two limousines, looking back over her shoulder through the window.

It was Preck Addams, she saw, crossing the street with quick steps.

"I want a lift," he said shamelessly.

"Where to?" she demanded. She was still obsessed with the idea of seeing the garden, of burying her face in the leaves.

"The Country Club," he said smilingly. "Where are you going?"

"Why, I *was* going to Morpeth Terrace," she retorted meaningly.

"But it's only eight miles out of your way," he pointed out.

"Well, I'm really only drifting, anyway," she explained. "I'll take you. Are you going to play golf?"

"Not now," he grinned pleasantly. "I am going with you—and Hermann is going to put up a tea for us—and we are going to climb the gray rocks, where we can see the whole course, and where we will be as conspicuous as possible—and we are going to consume the tea, and sit on this rug of Dave's, and enjoy the first real afternoon of spring! What do you say?"

"But——" she began.

He waved his hand impatiently.

"Don't interrupt," he retorted. "There go the gray poplars, now——"

"You're crazy, Preck," she said.

But her cheeks held a fairly perceptible deepening colour that had not been there a few minutes before, as they went by Morpeth Terrace, and the lawns on each side of the street became wider and wider, and the houses finer and grayer and bigger.

There was really no reason why she shouldn't, she reflected. It was perfectly all right. And it might not be much fun in the Morpeth Terrace garden, after all. Aunt Minnie would probably be drying her hair out there this afternoon; or some other equally inspiring event would be taking place. There was a wonderful view from the perch on the gray rocks. And Preck was always a good deal of a mystery, requiring pleasant solving.

"It's not such a bad idea," she amended.

"In fact, quite sensible," he finished. "I'll order

the tea the second we get in the driveway. Food makes anything reasonable."

She fell silent then, as the houses of East Clewesbury ran past like some perfectly oiled panorama, and the curving roadways and little patches of forest that surrounded the club came into sight.

"I'll sit out here on the porch," she said at the entrance. "I want to look at the shadows and the grass and the birds in the shrubbery."

This was something like it, indeed! Far stretches of sunlit grass, with graceful trees and shady hollows —and rock-fenced roadways and a touch of rippling stream.

How far away Kerrigan Street seemed, here.

How curious, too, that she had not realized before to-day just how much she and David were missing. How suddenly it had seemed to come upon her.

"And now for the climb!"

It was Preck's voice, she realized. He had the tea, in a big basket.

They climbed the pine-clad hill, then, in and out of the big gray rocks, the scene growing under their eyes into long graceful swells of even turf with groups of elms and here and there a raised tee, and off to the south great slopes and woods, the far-off greens sunk in shadow like fairy lawns in a dark forest.

On the very top, beside a great boulder, they made themselves comfortable.

"My idea of an afternoon's work," Preck asserted pleasantly.

"What do you have to review to-night?" she asked him.

"'Androcles and the Lion,'" he answered.

"It must be very pleasant work."

"It is," he said comfortably. He lit a cigarette. "It's an hour or two of forgetting—usually an evening of romance or melodrama, purchased for a column

of dramatic criticism. If only one didn't have one's confounded dreams——"

She glanced at him in surprise.

"But you have yours, haven't you?" she asked him.

"Have it?"

"'Types of Women,'" she said tentatively.

"Oh," he said, "that."

"Don't you—" she quoted, a little meanly from an advertisement she remembered—"Don't you 'understand the heart of woman'?"

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. He seemed to hesitate for an instant. "Some day," he said, "I'm going to write a real novel——"

"The great American——"

"If I can make it," he said with a grin.

She considered that at length.

"You would have to know a great deal, I should imagine——"

"An impossibility, I assume," he returned imperturbably.

"Well," she said with sudden animation, "wouldn't you have to know all sides of life—in Clewesbury, for instance?"

"Unquestionably."

"More than just Congress Avenue——"

"A little more." His irony was plain.

She stared out over the sweep of green sunlit country.

"Why don't you come down and work on Kerrigan Street?" she inquired. She picked a new blade of grass with careful precision.

"You don't seem to find it too promising—this afternoon," he ventured.

"I've been there all winter," she returned.

"Oh, I don't know," he remarked after a pause. He seemed to lose his seriousness. "Why glad hand the immigrant if you don't have to?"

She laughed at that.

"But you would get a new view of things, wouldn't you?" she inquired.

"Dave's view," he returned a little scornfully.

"Well, what's the matter with Dave's view?" she asked.

"No colour," he retorted. "No romance. Just dirt! It doesn't attract me."

She looked at him a little curiously.

"What does attract you, Preck?" she inquired.

"Far places," he pronounced carefully. "Strange emotions; new faces; queer foods."

"Oh," she said slowly. For a few minutes she considered it, watching a distant golfer address an invisible ball hopefully and then go the way of all mortals. "Well," she added, "better not marry then. You won't get any of those things—except queer food."

"Marriage shouldn't eliminate everything!" he maintained.

"But it does, doesn't it?" she inquired, looking at him with her warm gray eyes.

"If you let it," he agreed. "But it's really only a question of a person's right to personality. Personality and self-expression."

She stared out across the links once more.

"Maybe," she said.

"Good God, it shouldn't be a prison—you wouldn't maintain that, would you?" he asked.

"I?" she laughed. "I wouldn't maintain anything."

He stretched out comfortably, gazing at the late afternoon sky.

"Well, there are about two hundred more days this year, for instance. In those few days I want to ride up Fifth Avenue once, under the June moon, and see the copper-coloured Hudson through the

elms on the Drive. I want to drive through Gloucester once, and see the fishing fleet coming in before a stiff Atlantic breeze. I'd like to catch a glimpse of blue water just once from the heights above Clovelly. I want to take one look down the long vista of the gardens at Versailles, with the soldiers in their new horizon-blue uniforms beside the pools. I want to stand an instant on the walls of China and imagine I see those old hordes of Tartars—or were they Mongols, —come driving down out of the north——"

"You'll have to be a Cook's Tour, then, Preck!" she said with a tiny laugh. "I imagine you would make a fine guide—with a big trumpet, or is it a megaphone?"

"Megaphone preferred," he admitted.

"Why don't you enlist in the French foreign legion?" she inquired.

"I detest wars," he said emphatically.

"I think I do, too," she admitted. "I wouldn't fight for any Kaiser or any Czar."

"I suppose there's a country involved," he said craftily.

"Maybe," she said, "only I can't imagine Kenny Watson or Tom Dustin leaving the poolroom in the Clewesbury Club long enough to enlist, can you?"

"No," he admitted. "We're a nice tight little country—if you except New York! And they aren't Americans, anyway."

She did not seem to hear his last remark, however. She was looking out over the deepening shadows and black forests and dark greens, touched with the purple of the sunset behind the slopes.

"I suppose we'll have to be going," she said with a sigh, "I've had a very nice time."

"*Moi aussi!*" he returned, pulling himself to his feet stiffly. "I like to absorb wisdom——"

"From me?" she said with a smile. She seemed quite subdued.

"You are the only authority," he said gracefully.

"How?" she asked unexpectedly.

"Because my next book is about just one woman," he said quite seriously.

"Me?" she inquired laughingly.

"All of you rolled into one," he returned.

He rolled up the robe and took hold of the basket.

"I'll tell you about it some other time."

"I'd love to hear it," she answered.

Silence fell between them then as they picked their way down the path between the gray boulders quite forbidding now in the shadows—a silence that lasted while they got rid of the basket and started down the road toward the city.

What a curious meeting and afternoon, Preck was thinking—the first time he had really ever had a chance to talk to her alone. Why, she was distinctly attractive—she gave a curious emotional effect; she had a kind of passionate enchantment that could not be defined. He would like to see a great deal of her. . . .

He grinned to himself as they sped through the twilight past St. Peter's, down the motor-filled avenue, glittering with a thousand lights.

Well, he had better not begin that.

A sudden, illuminating glimpse of his existence since eighteen came to him with the thought, an existence outwardly smooth, almost conventional in design; set in the pleasant places of Clewesbury—the old red brick house on Congress Avenue with its sentinel deer, the Country Club, the cubbyhole office in the little *Evening Press* building known to him first when he covered the morgue—to his mother's extreme horror!—and known to him now as the dramatic critic of the paper; all places open

to him because of his father's name and position. Yes, it had appeared conventional enough.

And yet there had been nothing conventional about it, really, after those two years he had spent in the bond business in New York when David was still in medical school—those months when the ragged, seamy design of passion had been plainly visible beneath the conventional pattern of life. Midnight sallies into Broadway, suppers at Little Hungary; Phyllis at the Café Beaux Arts—with her mail coming addressed to Mabel Grant, of Tiffin, Ohio!—the three shepherdesses from the Arcadians, with their heavenly figures! What a magnificent, spendthrift, irresponsible youthful folly that all had been!

Those two years had left their indelible impress on his point of view, indeed—an impression that no amount of dances at the Clewesbury Club, no amount of the social life of Clewesbury's younger set could ever erase. Creatures of the same passions and follies, these girls of Congress Avenue, and the Georgian Club—only wrapped in a kind of social mist of convention! He had proved that, indeed, to his own satisfaction more than once. . . . There was the same human nature back of these marriages here, back of these pleasant houses and dinners that there was back of Broadway and the Café Beaux Arts!

How long would it be before Nancy found it out on Kerrigan Street—and came into full possession of her senses?

He ceased grinning abruptly, then, as they turned into the Square, and the hubbub of newsboys and crowds around the statues in the iron railings shut out everything from their ears except the roar of the city. Well, he had better not be around when she did. It would be the same damn thing over again, if he were——

She had—that passionate enchantment you couldn't define. . . .

The curse of Adam, perhaps.

"I'll have to leave you, I'm afraid," he said with sudden finality. "I'm due at the house about now—or I'd ride all the way out. Love to Davy. Bye-bye!"

"Good-night, Preck," she said with a friendly smile. "Remember the book!"

"I'll remember!" he called. . . .

CHAPTER VI

In Which David Gets a New View of Kerrigan Street and Nancy Experiences a Brand-New Emotion

That was the first time after her marriage that Nancy spent a whole afternoon alone with a man who was not her husband—and enjoyed it!

The idea stayed in her mind in the weeks that followed, colouring slightly for the first time the view she took of youthful married life. A curious freedom about marriage, and yet an odd restraint. Freedom with a string to it—that was what it was.

"Just out on bail, eh?" Preck laughed one afternoon when he met her in the Bankers Trust building and asked her over to the Pontiac, and she refused. Yes, that was it. Out on bail! One was apparently free and yet one wasn't. It was rather strange how Mary Thomas felt. She could go motoring or play golf with Kenny Watson, although she was married and her husband slaved all day downtown at the Fidelity. Eleanor Carter, too, could write a play with George Camden of the Press, and spend all her mornings with him. How did she reconcile that with marriage?

Well, it must be, she decided, finally, because they had no imps of conquest to spoil their relations with men. You could toy with the opposite sex as much as you liked so long as you did not give in to the imps. . . .

It was that conclusion which impelled her to say

yes, a few weeks later, to Kitty Sassoon's urgent invitation to go with her and Preck and Kenny to the afternoon tea dances at the Georgian. Perhaps some gaiety would do her good after the spell of warm weather.

She dressed in the little apartment, indeed, with unwonted excitement and hurried uptown in the pleasant sunshine. Why, she hadn't been to a tea dance in ever so long! This was really quite gay!

The afternoon itself, once she got to the Georgian, was almost like a scene of general rejoicing, of welcome. "Welcome to our city! Out of retirement! They all come to it!" A tiny flush of pleasure flooded her cheeks at the spontaneity and warmth of her welcome. Why, she had almost forgotten the colour and gaiety, the lights and glasses, and the sapphire lake just outside the windows! A little music, and a little dancing made everything different. . . .

"We must go some afternoon, Davie," she told him rapturously that night under the shaded candles. "It was no end of fun. I'd forgotten how much fun it was!"

"Since you married the old man!"

"But you've got young ideas!" she sang gaily, quoting a popular song.

"We'll take a whole evening to it, and do it up brown," he told her. "Theatre, dinner, supper, dancing, midnight cabaret!"

"Just my style," she agreed instantly.

They did that, too—about a week later, with Preck and Kitty Sassoon; staying until after one o'clock and everybody had gone and the waiters stacked the chairs.

"Wasn't it grand, David?" she demanded of him in the little bedroom, an hour later.

"It was immense," he said. "The only unpleasant thing is that the little Tomazolli child has

developed a high fever, so Vera's note says, and I'll have to go over there now instead of getting into that pleasant bed."

"Oh, dear," she said. "Right away?"

"Might be too late to-morrow," he said.

"I suppose so," she agreed. And she watched him go out, with sleepy eyes, and heard the motor start.

That was her reaction to their first late party. But it was one of David's few appearances.

"I'm afraid I can't go out on these all-night bats," he told her a week later. "I'm liable to be needed here. And as for the afternoon stuff, count me out. You get old Preck to go. I'll go evenings when I can."

"But I feel better when you are along," she said plaintively. "I feel so sort of—oh, sort of piggy when you aren't. And I am having a wonderful time and you are down here looking down some child's throat."

"But you can't help that, Nan," he told her. "I have to work."

"I know," she admitted.

"Then why worry?" he smiled.

Well, the other girls didn't, she admitted to herself, as she dressed a little later. The men weren't to be pitied anyway, as a matter of fact. They didn't want to do these things very much. Not the husbands, anyway! Wasn't it queer that husbands always seemed interested in business or hospitals or law offices or banks, and couldn't seem to find a single instant for anything else—unless it were golf? It was only single men who seemed to like to play around.

"Though David is really hipped on his subject, I'm afraid," she told Preck with a little laugh. "He lectures me at a frightful rate sometimes——"

"Criticizes——" Preck began.

"Oh, no," she interrupted. "Just tells me what's the matter and what a shame it is, and why can't he get anywhere in the tenements. You know—politics and industrial revolutions and things like that."

"Things to worry about, I suppose," Preck remarked cheerfully.

"It's very interesting sometimes."

"If you only didn't have to live with it!"

"Exactly," she agreed.

It couldn't be so very important, however, she decided finally. There was never any mention of it at lunch on Morpeth Terrace. And certainly her father was a well-informed man. No one ever talked about such things at the Georgian Club, either. A lot of foreigners whose ideas and ideals couldn't ever be ours! That's what the people beyond Pollock's bar were, she gathered of an afternoon. Let them go back to Europe, if they didn't like it in Clewesbury. David's idea of doing something about democracy, well—well, it probably was just one more of his ideas. That was all.

That was the extent of her real understanding of the convictions which David was beginning to form and to voice during that first summer they lived in the Brotherhood House.

And yet she was not really to blame. It was the day then, on Congress Avenue, of the romance of business, as the gallery of impressionistic pictures which hung in the Chamber of Commerce made clear.

Glimpses of romantic high lights in Clewesbury, those pictures were—the South Clewesbury rolling mills at night, white flashes of steel illuminating the clouds; the Pennsylvania switch-yards at sunset, heavy gray freight trains rumbling eastward into the red and green dotted dusk; the Baden Street

potteries at dawn, thin trickles of smoke from the slumbering kilns crawling toward the sky; disgorging hour beside the Lewisohn garment factories, cheerful faced crowds of workmen streaming from the greenish light of the buildings—sixty per cent. more efficient than incandescents, the circular said!—streaming into the dusk of the winter's night.

All the wonder of Paris in May, of London in June, of the Riviera in February, crowded into the romance of Clewesbury's industries—the drama of achievement, the fairy tale of business.

Why, it was only a hundred years since the first settler had decided the river gorge was too steep to cross and had staked out his claim, writing to his family back in York State to come by boat in the spring. Was there any one who could deny the romance of the hundred years since?

That was Congress Avenue's usual view.

Only on Kerrigan Street was there a murmur against it. Yes, a striking series of pictures, no doubt—so Kerrigan Street was murmuring!—and bearing out with the emphasis of genius if not truth the legend the carved letters around the high frieze of the Chamber spelled: Commerce is the Carrier of Civilization. But just when had the Lewisohn garment factories disgorged that crowd with the cheerful faces? Into the bitter cold of the March strike? Commerce the Carrier of Civilization, too! Was it? Or did Commerce carry these long lines of tenements around the world, and call them civilization?

That was the murmur of Kerrigan Street as it pondered the romance, harshly, vulgarly, ignorantly—in the light of its corner saloons and ten-cent movies and its inescapable materialism. There was no romance in A. J. Van Wyck or Isaac Lewisohn, the murmur pointed out; none in the Baden Street

potteries or the South Clewesbury rolling mills. No romance or civilization, either! Just production. No voice of labour or humanity was heard behind those grim gates, any more than in the marble Chamber of Commerce hall, where labour stood outside while wealth alone spoke to amiable business men in the voice of Andrew Van Wyck, and the papers called it America's own.

Why, romance was dollars! And Civilization was wider markets! And human labour was merely the pigment prodigal artists splashed so recklessly to produce these masterpieces of romance. That was the truth. Before God! Who was there to say differently, who lived beyond Pollock's bar?

That was the murmur of Kerrigan Street. . . .

David heard it, of course, a little uncomfortably, in those calls he made for the Brotherhood House on Grand Street, on Kerrigan Street, and Western Avenue. Like some maelstrom of races and creeds, the tenements had appeared to him at first. Just a vast, conglomerate mass of waving arms and shouting voices and loud-mouthed, loose-lipped conviction—appearing before him now as Anton Fechter, talking of the amalgamated clothing workers and the brotherhood of industry just around the corner; appearing now as Anzia Lublin, with her bitter cry of the outsider, beating in vain on Anglo-Saxon walls of culture; again as Zalinsky, with his Hebraic dramatic ability, bringing down (or at least calling it!) the Red Curse on reactionary clothing contractors! Socialists, Jews, Communists, Anarchists, Labour Unionists! Italians, Negroes, Poles, Bohemians—every nation and belief. A veritable babel of beliefs and prejudices that beat on one's brain like a thousand hammers, beating, hammering, smashing the truth into a thousand distorted fragments!

That was the way Kerrigan Street had appeared to him at first.

He had not had the first glimmer of understanding until he had gone with Anton Fechter one rainy March night and heard him talk. He had climbed the ill-lighted stairs to the bare hall over the Greek candy store that night, too, with a distinct expectation of getting merely one more steam-hammer, trip-hammer mental blow. Only when he had gazed on the one hundred poorly dressed men around the old desks and tables under the gaslight had he been aware of his immense relief. Why, they were studying, he had seen at once. There was going to be no noise. They were not going to say anything!

The next moment he had realized the meaning of the thing—and the scene had burnt itself on his brain forever. Why, these one hundred men, of nineteen nationalities and a dozen creeds, representing a thousand foreigners earning their bread and butter in Clewesbury, and all following this tall, black-bearded Galician—these one hundred men who were not waving their arms wildly, nor talking loudly, but who had silently united to fight for their homes, their children, and living wages, who were breaking in silence the barriers of race and religion beyond Pollock's bar—these one hundred men were a union!

He had not been able to forget that evening in the cold hall, indeed, when he had sat back in his overcoat on a rear bench and listened to Fechter teaching the principles of production and distribution, and nineteen different accents had made response in broken English, and he had caught a glimpse of the industrial struggle at work.

It had been his first glimmer of light. Why, this was America here—this was the American ideal to Kerrigan Street. This was the thing to be thanked,

the thing to call out courage and allegiance here! A union!

"Why, damn it all," he told Preck a few days later in the pleasant dim grill of the Lotos Club. "That's all they see of America. Why wouldn't they give their allegiance to the unions? That's where the Brotherhood House falls down. It ought to be a regular forum for every foreigner, society, union, and what not in Clewesbury. It ought to represent America to them just as much as their union does. More. It ought to show them the real America, what she really stands for."

"If you can find any America to represent," Preck remarked.

"I mean our America," David retorted. Only a Brotherhood House that presented to Kerrigan Street the real, democratic ideal of America could ever hope to tear away from these men the class prejudice which their new position in this strange land seemed to render inevitable. A place that did something about it, and was not content merely to talk Americanism at them. That seemed to be plain.

"I've gotten inside the skin of the men who do the hard physical work of this country," he told Preck while that gentleman devoted himself to an extra fine duck. "The views they hold are amazing. Do you know that I can't tell Kerrigan Street that our churches, even, are for any one except the bosses? Our police, and our judges and government, too!"

"That's foolishness," said Preck.

"Maybe," said David. "But some of these chaps have worked here for years and never been spoken to by an American except to be cursed, never run up against the police except in strikes, never heard of a judge except when he issued an injunction against them. Democracy is the phrase the steamship

agents use to get men to America—that's what they say. Why, I've got an acquaintance on Grand Street—he's a liberal professor from Kieff, a Russian, exiled by the Czar—who doesn't believe yet that our churches aren't like his were in Russia—part of a system of oppression and exploitation, the clergy all of Junker persuasion, the only idea behind them the perpetuation of the power of the men who support them. The churches are for the rich! To keep things as they are! To distract attention from this world to the next!"

"Good gracious!" said Preck, "I had no idea of our rascality!"

"It doesn't seem possible, does it? But it's not so surprising. They're people from all kinds of countries, but nationality seems to stop in their point of view on industry. They've all come from the same system in Europe—Junker clergy, Junker landed aristocracy, Junker industrial magnates, whether in Austria, Russia, or Germany. Incredible intolerance. That's the thing they are trying to escape when they come over here, the thing that has kept them down, kept them from making a decent living for themselves and their children.

"That's the reason they've come here. They have come, expecting a new country, expecting a fair, square deal, liberty, and equality of opportunity. Every time they don't get it—for some reason or other—and we've got our share of native hogs!—they naturally jump to the conclusion that America is like Europe. They don't like the men who run the country!"

He drank up the last of his beer in the grill.

"That's about the way I've figured out my job, finally—my job, and yours, and every decent American's. It's to see that they get that square deal. And understand that we actually have a democracy

here, not another Europe. Show them what America means to us, so that they'll get the spirit of the enterprise. Show them we don't consider them entirely dirt, entirely in the light of so much cheap labour. But as new citizens, too—as new neighbours, new friends. Don't you see it that way?"

"I don't know," said Preck. "I suppose so."

He looked at himself in the mirror to see if his necktie was at the right angle and then turned away.

"I suppose you think more of these things when you live on Kerrigan Street. I suppose you're more than half right."

He shook hands with David on the kerb outside.

"Ta! Ta!" he said.

And went off toward the Square. . . .

"I guess it's a double task," David told John Foster that night, in the study of the Second Presbyterian. "Just as yours has proved to be. Half of my job is going to be interesting and convincing the Americans I know. Particularly my executive committee, Herbert Pratt and Doctor Musson and people like that. What Congress Avenue doesn't know about Kerrigan Street is just about equal to what Kerrigan Street doesn't believe about Congress Avenue.

"What we all have got to learn, evidently, is that Americanism isn't something half of the people can force down the throats of the other half—merely because they got here first. It isn't an inherited, completed jewel. It is a growth, an ideal, grounded on faith in the possibilities of the ordinary man, a path leading toward political and industrial and social brotherhood. We've all got to live together, and evolve a real Christian democracy—no matter what that implies!"

To make the Brotherhood House forward that ideal, indeed, would be an adventure involving a

lifetime of study and devotion, an adventure that might lead to unsuspected places and trials but whose final success at any rate would be the actual, real thing in achievement—that achievement about which he and Preck had mooned so sentimentally at college.

It was that idea which David was trying to put into practice, in those weeks of the summer when he spoke to Fechter's union at night, when he went noons to the Socialist hall on Sixtieth Street, when he held those discussions evenings in the study of the Brotherhood House. While Nancy went out more and more afternoons, and an occasional evening as well, without him, and he looked on with unthinking approval. Always a touch of the philosopher about David—with his eyes upon his fine theories of humanity and his gaze averted from the shiftless beggar before him. Any thief could always have stolen his watch while he descanted to him upon the value of time. Nancy's youth called for a good time and she should have it! That was what he would have told any one who had presumed to warn him of the pitfalls the future could hold. . . .

Well, there might never have been any pitfalls either, had it not been for the curious twist which Fate gave to Nancy's existence just then. And she was never responsible for that.

Just a vivid picture it was that came to her suddenly one noon, as she drove past a hot-chestnut stand downtown—a picture of falling leaves and brown, half-open chestnut burrs under the big chestnut tree at the far end of the Morpeth Terrace garden. And she turned her machine up the long yellow and brown length of Congress Avenue almost at once.

"I've come for lunch—and chestnuts!" she told Maggie at the door. "How's the family?"

"Just speaking," nodded Maggie in a whisper.

She surveyed her father and Aunt Minnie at lunch, filled with sudden amusement at the truth of Maggie's description. Yes, just speaking, and nothing more! That was the chronic state of these two inhabitants of Morpeth Terrace. How did they manage to keep it up, year after year?

"I see by the paper," said Minnie uncompromisingly, once the silence had become unbearable, "that your David addressed the Amalgamated last night."

"Oh, did he?" queried Nancy.

"Weren't you there?" asked Minnie.

"I was at the Rialto and the Georgian with Preck and Kitty."

"Oh," responded Minnie. She ate her dessert very carefully while her brother rose and left word with Maggie that Mr. Stone should wait when he came. "You find Mr. Addams very interesting," she murmured then.

"You mean amusing," corrected Nancy.

"He's so literary and clever, I suppose."

"Oh, so!" agreed Nancy ironically.

"And David's best friend."

"Yes, his best friend."

"Isn't it fortunate," purred Minnie, "that you get on so wonderfully well? Most wives find their husband's friends so uninteresting."

"And lucky they do, you mean?" asked Nancy cheerfully.

"What do you mean?" inquired Minnie coldly.

"Oh, Aunt Min," protested Nancy, "you're so transparent! Do you think I am having an affair with Preck?"

"Why, I——" began Minnie.

But Nancy interrupted her in her turn.

"Don't worry!" She smiled. "Preck is too easy."

Aunt Minnie was really too simple, she thought,

as she arranged with Maggie for the chestnuts and went into the music room to seat herself at the piano, turning idly the leaves of "L'Ame des Iris," half improvising the accompaniment. Why, any one could get Preck's interest who was even halfway attractive and feminine! There was no achievement in that—nothing that would require many meetings and dances and teas. Conquest was only really exciting and satisfying when they were sure of themselves or thought they didn't like you or were extremely conceited. . . .

She half rose from the piano at the sound of the doorbell before she remembered that she was not on Kerrigan Street now, and there were people to answer bells here.

"Mr. Stone, I suppose," she said half questioningly to Aunt Minnie.

"Yes," that lady answered, after an instant's attention to the voices in the hall.

"Oh," said Nancy.

She seemed oddly meditative as she stood by the rose-coloured seat beneath the picture of Wagner, one knee on the upholstery, while the footsteps down the hall proclaimed that Mr. Stone had been shown into the library—as if perhaps she were thinking of the last time Mr. Stone had entered her life for an hour. Not much over a year ago that had been —and she was married! Completely unchanged was the garden, the pergola, the poplars. Completely unchanged, too, were the big, wide stairs back of her, the blue-hung dining room, the big vases where once the giants had crouched the better to seize you as you made a rush for the stairs in the twilight.

Well, was she not completely unchanged, too? Was she not merely Nancy Van Wyck, grown older, more sophisticated, but otherwise unchanged?

"Tell Stone I'll be right down!"

It was the voice of Andrew Van Wyck from the landing above the stairs, where he stood, cigar in hand, looking down for an instant before he went back into his room.

"I will," Nancy said impassively.

She stood a moment longer, like some vivid ghost of her old self, her hand at her throat in a curious attitude, before she turned from the window toward the library. And then she walked across the rugs and the hall, her eyes searching the big oblong room for signs of the visitor as she held the heavy curtains apart at the doorway.

He was standing by the high bookshelves, she saw instantly, reading some thick volume by one of the tiny pottery lamps, one foot on the dark wood settee, the spray of light falling across the white pages in his hand, throwing into relief the line of his clear-cut chin and big nose, softening the heavy mass of thick black hair above his high forehead. Tall, conceited, commanding—that was the impression! Yes, he really looked rather distinguished—more so than she had remembered him. Was he still as crazy about himself and his New York?

"Father says he will be right down," she announced impassively.

"Thank you," said Forrester Stone.

He did not look up from his book. His voice held no intonation of any kind, either, unless it were that of complete detachment.

For an instant the girl by the doorway could not believe it. And then she named her emotion instantly. Indignation! Indignation at his rudeness, his discourtesy, his unruffled conceit. When she had spent half an afternoon with him once, when she had been on committees with him, when he must have heard her father call, when he knew there was only one Nancy Van Wyck!

Vivid emotion flamed at the thought. And instant decision came to her. Click! Without waiting a second, she turned the electric switch which lay under her hand. Click!

And the darkness came as if someone had thrown it into the room! Unmistakable, the thing was, must have been, to any one in the library, left in that deep gloom, relieved only by the gray light of the distant French windows where they looked out on the garden.

But only for an instant did Nancy permit herself to enjoy that idea. And then she turned and fled up the stairs like a bad child, in her heart an incredibly odd mixture of vivid pique and gloating triumph.

Well, she had fixed Forrester Stone that time! Perhaps he would know her again!

CHAPTER VII

WHEREIN FORRESTER STONE IS THE VICTIM OF A PLOT BUT DOES NOT APPEAR TO OBJECT IN THE LEAST

WELL, if you had asked Clewesbury just then to select the man most unlikely to fall victim to feminine wiles, the chances are that the choice would have fallen on Forrester Stone. A man of intense ambition and iron resolve, without an intimate in the world, so Congress Avenue would have told you! Where would a woman find any place in his grim scheme of things?

Distinctly a tribute to the man's personality, indeed, was the impression the New Yorker had made on Clewesbury. Why, he was the brains and dynamo of many a Wall Street dynasty with which his name did not appear! He kept a villa on the Shore Road although he was only in town three days a week. He was the confidential adviser of more than one great and mysteriously powerful corporation of lower Broadway—a sort of Metternich of finance, a Bismarck of industry. At the age of thirty-eight he devoted three days a week to Clewesbury and A. J. Van Wyck only for some enormous monetary consideration. And all he sold was his brains, his advice.

It wasn't likely, was it, that he would prove an easy conquest for any young lady?

The question, nevertheless, ran through Nancy's mind half seriously, half humorously, as she con-

sidered the thing at length on the davenport next morning, staring out into the dirty confusion of Kerrigan Street. It would only be a matter of time, of course, before she met him somewhere. He did not go to the dances at the Clewesbury Club, and winter precluded golf. But he had business conferences with her father every week. It would only be a question of time before she saw him again, if she wanted to arrange it so! And when she did—well, when she did, it really seemed as if it would be necessary to show him what a girl could do!

The idea animated her quite vividly during the next few days, as she called at noon at the Van Wyck building for her father and eyed the big bronze doorways in the clear, crisp November air.

Her heart beat a little faster on the fourth day, too, as he came out behind her father and got into the motor. But she disregarded him coolly.

"Hello, Father," she said. "Where away?"

"Home," said that taciturn individual.

She listened with unusual intentness at lunch then, a half-formed plan in her mind. Just a dim idea she had that the days of active operation of the potteries were over; a hazy conception, too, that deals of some indefinite sort—such as the building of the Van Wyck building, the fight with Mr. Morris and the Common Council over the new Union Station and the Clewesbury hotel site, the enlargement of the harbour so as to accommodate the ore boats from Lake Superior and allow shipments to Pittsburgh over the Clewesbury Southern—that things of this sort took up the time now of the clerks and associates of Andrew Van Wyck. United Clothing—that was the latest plan, too. She knew that because of her father's trips to Chicago and New York, and the reiteration of Sam Lewisohn's name.

"Hasn't Anton Fechter something to do with that?" she inquired.

Keen, sardonic amusement sprang in Mr. Van Wyck's eyes.

"Well, not if we can help it," he replied with a grin. "Why?"

"Because I know him," she replied.

"You do?" It was the first time that Forrester Stone had appeared to notice her. "Where did you meet him?"

"My husband knows him," she explained.

"Oh, does he come to the Brotherhood House?"

"Once in a while," she nodded.

She stared at him coolly, too, so that he hesitated just a perceptible second before he continued:

"I'd like to see that new dispensary sometime soon."

"We would be delighted, I'm sure," she said. "Call me up some day when you have time, and I'll show you the place. We're quite proud of it now."

"I won't forget," he repeated.

"Nor will I," she assured him.

That was the entire extent of her conversation with him.

But she spent the next few days in a state of delightful uncertainty, answering the telephone every time it rang, wondering if he were going to call. Two days—and she felt a sense of failure. And then on the fourth day she recognized his voice instantly, a tiny wave of exultation sweeping over her as she stood at the 'phone. So, he had meant to call, after all! Yes, it would be convenient, she assured him.

She watched him quite closely for signs of interest, as she took him over the Brotherhood House an

hour later—the gymnasium, the big assembly room, the dispensary, and the bare study where David's rubbers by the rainswept door gave mute evidence of their owner's absent-mindedness. But he really seemed to be genuinely interested, she admitted to herself, as she led him up the winding stairs to the living room of her own apartment. He seemed to have a decidedly real interest in finding out just what the Brotherhood House was doing now—even down to where Anzia Lublin had come from and what money was spent for what, and David's lunches with Anton Fechter over in Moynihan's saloon. . . .

There was no evidence of any game about that!

"It's not entirely a vicarious interest, of course," he told her abruptly before the wood fire. "Edmunds and your father have left these charity interests in my hands——"

"Oh, I see," Nancy murmured.

"I'm to take Edmunds's place on the board next month."

An instant regret in Forrester Stone the moment he had said it.

There had been no vital reason why he should go over this settlement house again with her this afternoon—not a real one. The information would have come in plenty of time through the regular channels. But he had called her up on impulse—rare occurrence! Something he would never have done in New York. He had wanted to see what she would do next—after that surprising moment in the library when she had plunged him and his volume of "Europe since 1815" into darkness.

An absolutely original girl!

That was the real reason he had come—there was no use trying to avoid the fact. Van Wyck had maintained an inscrutable silence on the subject—even down to the name of his son-in-law. The old

man was no fool, of course. He had no use for his son-in-law, apparently; nor any overweening affection for his daughter. But then you could never tell. A man like that never showed anything. A daughter—any woman, in fact!—was a factor not to be ignored, never to be neglected, at any rate.

In the pleasant November dimness, he stared at her, conscious of her youth and slender grace in the glow of the fire. Well, she was attractive enough!

"Do you hold any position?" he inquired.

"Not unless it's that of general truant."

"I don't believe that," he said gallantly.

"But it's true," she told him.

"Well, Palm Beach or Hot Springs would be more amusing just now!" he admitted with a smile.

"I shouldn't object." She shrugged her shoulders.

"But you can't run a Settlement there," he suggested tentatively.

"Nor have a doctor for a husband!"

"No. He is very much interested, of course."

The remark brought him up short, indeed. Just what sort of man was it who married a girl like this and then brought her down in this hole and expected her to be happy? He could not be just an ordinary doctor. She would never have married any second-rate chap. And this Brotherhood House stamped him as being out of the general run. Settlements were distinctly apart from the vital business of life. The people who ran them and made a lifework of it were usually filled with some religious motive. Probably this man was one of those windbag leaders who had caught her on some religious rebound and fired her imagination for the time being. And she had awakened to find herself married.

That would explain old Van Wyck's silence.

Nothing except some such disagreement could account, either, for his coldness to such a captivating

young person. Why, she had a kind of passionate charm that was indefinable just sitting in this living room—she seemed all graceful lines, all rounded arms and knees, if you could take your glance away from her golden-gray eyes and white throat. She did not belong on this gray, filthy street in this city by the lake. She belonged on Fifth Avenue, in the Ritz, at Lenox and Newport or Westchester. She was sophisticated enough to hold her own there. No modest violet could have grown up in that Morpeth Terrace house. And she had more than a touch of the old man's brains.

Wasting them down here in a Settlement House!

"It isn't very exciting for a woman, I imagine," he remarked with an effort at continuity.

"Oh, I don't know," Nancy said. "I manage to have a good time."

"You do?"

"Oh, Clewesbury isn't New York," she said with a tiny laugh. "But we manage to enjoy ourselves pretty well. Have you ever been to the Georgian in the afternoon?"

"No—hardly," he said with a grin he could not suppress. What would Wall Street say to him tea dancing at the Georgian, indeed! The idea brought a kind of grim laughter with it. He, who never had an instant to himself that did not have to be used somehow; who carried his office, and Blunt, his secretary, and part of his library with him wherever he went—he dancing!

"Don't you dance?" she inquired. There was almost a kind of astonishment in her tone.

"Not your dances, I fear," he said humbly.

"What kind do you dance?" she inquired.

"I haven't danced in ten years," he said.

"Not at all?"

"Not at all."

He could not remember dancing, as a matter of fact, since the Artists' Ball at the Astor—that masquerade to which he had gone only because Charles S. Steele had said he would give him a final answer there on the publicity contract of the Atlantic Life. . . .

"What a pity!" she cried. "You must miss it!"

"Oh, I don't know——" he began.

"You've just stayed a hermit," she pointed out.

"Not exactly that," he remonstrated. The sixth floor of 220 Broadway would hardly call him a hermit, indeed!

"I know just how you feel!"

He looked at her with an old mixture of amusement and uneasiness as she went across the room to the mahogany cabinet by the wall and took out a small pile of records. What was she going to propose now? That they dance! Distinctly, this was not his province. . . .

"Here's a real jazzy thing," she cried enthusiastically. "I'll show you the fox trot!"

It was on his lips to protest, to refuse, of course—it would simply be making a fool out of him!

But she had his hands before he could make his refusal effective.

"The easiest thing in the world," she said gaily. "Put your arm around me, and count just like this—one, two; three, four; and then side two-step—it's straight forward and then back, you know, and you can do what you like in the side slides, or even put in the funny little forward and back run!"

"I see," he said helplessly.

Well, it was an exceedingly ridiculous affair, of course—he, Forrester Stone, fox trotting to a victrola, in the late afternoon, with a very flushed and youthful person who held him very close.

But he forgot the ridiculous side of it with sur-

prising suddenness as soon as he caught the dance step a moment later. Why, the dance was really quite catchy!

"You must come over to-morrow to the Georgian," she told him at the end of ten minutes. "I am going there with Preck Addams. Come over about five. And I'll give you more chance to practise. You'll be crazy about it as soon as you get it down pat!"

"Yes, I can see I might," he said. "Why, I haven't been so gay in years!"

"Nothing to what you can do if you try!" she told him lightly. "You'll be all right!"

Or all wrong, he told himself, as he went stubbornly down the stairs to his automobile a half hour later. No, he would not stay until her husband came home! He wouldn't wait another minute! Why, she was an absolute little enchantress. How had he happened to overlook it before?

Neither the grave ceremony of dinner at the Edmunds', nor the talk in the library afterward, effaced that impression for him that evening. He caught himself debating the question with a gravity and a weighing of remarks, smiles, and glances that were almost schoolboyish in their absurdity. What colour a girl like that brought into a man's life! What colour—or disaster! All depending upon whether she was sincere or not.

The answer to that, of course, ought to determine whether he should accept her invitation to drop in at the Georgian Club at five for a dance. And yet he knew enough to take care of himself. There was no reason why he should take her too seriously. Nothing was involved but a rather refreshing glimpse of youth and beauty! It really didn't matter what she meant so long as she passed a pleasant, entertaining hour for him.

Morning brought an ordinary, matter-of-fact decision. Well, he would drop in if he found time, if he got the statements of the Mandelbaum factory into intelligible shape and survived the meetings of the Clewesbury Potteries and the railway conference. It would brace him for the evening like a cocktail of some sort—a draught of youth.

He wanted to go, of course! There was no use trying to fool himself—only these verbose idealists did that. Such flashes of colour didn't come every day—not in a whole summer of week-ends out on Long Island or along the Sound shore.

And after all he hadn't had a minute off in nearly two years. . . .

He felt a little silly, nevertheless, as he mounted the steps of the Georgian some hours later, and gave his hat to the trim maid by the ivy-trellised doorway of the grill. All ages, he recognized instantly, and a really irresistible—what was it, a fox trot?

There was really something fascinating about it!

"Hello!"

He saw his whilom partner dancing with Preck Addams at the same instant, and she waved at him in return, and then stopped.

"Our table's in the far corner," she called.

"All right," he replied smilingly.

There was a kind of vivacity to the scene, he reflected, as he sat by the table waiting for the music to cease—a kind of vivacity that probably passed for life to people who did not lead very exciting existences—people whose time hung heavy on their hands. It might hold a distinct change for men like himself, too—like golf or bridge at five-thirty at the club, with a drink or two to liven things up. It had its function, right enough.

And for women, probably, it was life itself—emotion, bright clothes, music, and gaiety. . . .

He acknowledged the introduction to PreckAddams perfunctorily—the local literary celebrity, he remembered dimly!—and held Nancy's hand quite firmly.

"I really must thank you," he said formally. "It is decidedly surcease from all care."

"You haven't begun to enjoy it yet!" she said instantly.

There was a very bright light in her golden-gray eyes as if the soft lamps on the tables had all contrived to shine in her direction.

"You're sure you can get Kitty?" she turned to Preck.

"As sure as mere man can ever be," that individual returned.

"Then see if you can't," she begged. "Right away."

She sat down then at the little green table almost concealed in the corner of the room by the palms, stripping off her light gray gloves while he watched her with odd disquiet.

"I almost didn't make it," he said at last.

"Too selfish?" she queried.

"Busy," he said. She affected him powerfully, like wine, even here.

"I meant too busy rolling up dollars for yourself," she corrected coolly.

"Why, I've got beyond that, I think," he stated after an instant's astonishment.

In the soft light he looked at her with veiled surprise. She seemed to-day to have all the *savoire faire*, the intellectual touch of a society woman—not to resemble in the least the flushed, passionate creature who had stirred him so the afternoon before.

"You do get to the trustee state, you know," he said a little coldly. She was probably not interested in the least.

"What do you mean by that?" she inquired.

"Why, building for the future," he replied precisely. Somehow it irritated him to explain to her. He had intended to discuss other things!

"Whose future?" she inquired.

"Humanity's," he retorted.

She looked at him with sudden surprise, her lips parted.

"That's what David says," she exclaimed.

"Others have said it," he agreed ironically.

But she appeared vitally interested.

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean we are trustees entrusted with the employment of America's capital—for the future," he said. He would have to be polite, of course. "The ordinary person doesn't think—isn't capable of directing the employment even of his own savings. Our job is the proper employment of them—not so much to produce immediate profits to divide up among people whom it wouldn't benefit—they don't save, you know!—but for the future. No rich man spends his fortune these days. He reinvests it. He feels he hasn't the right to spend it when progress demands every cent of capital it can get. Our generations are building for the future. That's how we have built the railroads, the art galleries, the libraries. By thrift!"

"And that's your justification, I suppose," she smiled. "David says every man carries the justification for his acts in his own heart."

"It's my justification," he replied diplomatically, realizing suddenly that he was talking shop.

Somehow, she gave an essentially different impression from yesterday, he could not help thinking, as they ventured out on the shining floor a minute later, lured by the sound of a new Egyptian waltz. She gave an impression of reserve, of strength, of

complete self-possession that was absolutely opposed to the abandon of her actions in the dim firelit living room. And yet the mere knowledge that somewhere in her a fire lay smouldering was enough to induce a desire to break down that self-possession and bring back the excitement of her embrace. Perhaps that accounted for the effect of seduction she achieved, the effect of enchantment. . . .

He gave up his attempt about six o'clock—vaguely recognizing, too, that he had been making such an effort!—and sat with her rather moodily while they watched Kitty Sassoon and Preck doing an intricate step.

"I'll have to be moving along, I fear," he said then rather formally. "And I suppose it means I won't see you for some time again. You're always so busy——"

"Not too busy for my friends," she shrugged her shoulders.

"But too busy for me," he suggested.

She took the gauntlet up coolly.

"I have found you very interesting," she said.

He stared contemplatively at the dancers.

"Do you ever find yourself downtown for lunch?" he inquired.

"I'm coming down to-morrow," she answered. "David's practice has knocked out any luncheon hour in the apartment."

"Have lunch with me," he urged, with sudden desire.

She turned her gray eyes on him; and for the first time he saw they could be quite sombre.

"Why, I will," she replied. "It would be quite a lark."

CHAPTER VIII

In Which Public Opinion Is Discussed at Great Length Only to Be Terribly Flouted

That was the winter of nineteen sixteen—the winter of swelling prosperity overcast by only one shadow. An annoying thing, these submarine sinkings! And badly destructive of business. Why could not Germany stop them, and let everyone be about his business? This European war would mean nothing to Clewesbury then. No one could tell just what it was all about, anyhow, beneath the avalanche of White Books and Blue Books and Black Books and Green Books—denying, retracting, confusing, accusing! Belgium might be a victim or an accomplice, and Serbia a plotter or a fool! How could it be a war for democracy, either, with the troops of the Czar invading East Prussia, and Germany beset and embattled breathing terrible charges against perfidious Albion, and a great party of Social Democracy supporting a Kaiser?

Clewesbury discussed that back and forth, in the pauses of business, while Van Wyck mistook Von Bethmann Hollweg for a South German state, and Doctor Musson kept discreet silence when Jonathan Edmunds proclaimed King Albert an impractical fool and Karl Heinrichs opined, through his whiskers, that Wilhelm would show them. . . .

A great ground swell of good business from this war so far; that was the only visible, real result. Out Cuyahoga Avenue way almost over-night the great

Ludington Works seemed to have risen. At night, too, downtown, men spoke of the doubling and tripling and quadrupling of the output down at the Craven machine shops, the Magnet automobile factories. Why would not Germany quit this submarine nonsense and let everyone go back to business before the whole European continent went into bankruptcy, as the *Evening Post* pointed out every night? The expense of the thing would make them all stop pretty soon, anyway, as every economist knew. War was a thing of the past! Even Clewesbury would not wish to go on selling them on credit forever.

That was the shadow.

And yet there were a few who saw the plain future.

In the pottery-filled library on Morpeth Terrace, white-haired Van Wyck watched his publicity adviser smoke cigarette after cigarette as he walked up and down the softly lit room.

"Why, Wall Street is practically unanimous on it." Stone's voice was a trifle hoarse. "It's merely a question of time—the moment will come when the President can't keep our honour intact and keep us out of the war. And the people will choose war, pacifists, Socialists, Hearst to the contrary. The Anglo-French bonds are our guarantee of the way Morgan feels about it. We'll go in on the side of the Allies within a year!"

Van Wyck's face was a study in granite.

"Well?" he remarked.

"It means we have a year to finish the whole thing," Stone retorted a little contemptuously. "A year to persuade Lewisohn, reincorporate, get Klaw and Mandeville and Morris, Magnusson and Company in on it, exchange valuations, list the stock, underwrite it—Sam Harris will do it, he told me in New York yesterday—and put it on the market here to get our capital back and start operations."

He lit another cigarette.

"Whatever happens, then we'll be in shape—no matter which way the cat jumps. None of these piker, fly-by-night sweatshop concerns can bite off any such uniform orders as Uncle Sam will place."

He rose and went to the bookshelves.

"It's just the Napoleonic wars and 1812 over again, with a little variation. We didn't keep out then; we won't now."

He flung a big blue-covered volume on the table under the lamp.

"Read that when you get a chance. And then put the clamps on old Lewisohn, put them on hard. If he sticks out for cash, all the money in the country can't finance United Clothing. They've got to take stock! Good God, aren't you putting in Mandelbaum's business; aren't you showing good faith? If they don't come in with us, we'll break them."

In the sudden silence Van Wyck stared into the fire.

"Suppose the Germans win? Or the war stops?"

"You mean now, to-day?"

"Yes, before we get in."

Forrester Stone spread out his slender, muscular hands.

"We'll sell out our own stock to the public along with the underwriters."

"By God!"

The admiration in Van Wyck's tone was plain.

"Though that's failure!" Stone's voice took on a tone of grim determination. "We don't want to fail. We want to sell our common stock to the public, and some of our preferred simply on the same basis the steel trust did. Economies of operation, of buying, of selling, of advertising, of factory costs—something can be done with the style question, too. I've got Onderdonk on a campaign on that now.

This whole question of individuality in clothes, you know, has been brought on by the manufacturer himself."

"I used to buy mine from a pile in Garson's!" Van Wyck nodded laconically.

"The cut-price mushroom concerns won't bother us. We'll disregard them."

"If they disregard us!"

"As they will. They'll be doing contracting for us in a year. In two years we'll tell labour where they get off. We'll start to undermine 'em right at the start. Put some stool pigeons in their unions. They're all foreigners, Jews mostly. Poor, ignorant. Ideal labour if they're let alone. We can continue the Protocol till then."

In the silence the old man stared at the younger one with a curious light in his eyes.

"Where do you get the time for all your reading, Stone?" he asked.

The question seemed to embarrass the younger man.

"Snatches."

"By God, I wish I'd had your education." Van Wyck stood up with his back to the fire. "I've gotten my education right in this room—since I built this house. I never went beyond the fourth grade in school. I've sat here night after night for fifteen years, reading. I pulled a bone in the club to-night —how in Hell would I ever hear of Solon? I thought he was some new politician from Oklahoma!"

"There's no one in the club with your experience and judgment."

"Maybe."

The irony in his voice was noticeable. What was success worth, anyway, if a man kept in his heart such a dim quarrel with existence? The whole thing, from youth to old age, was a rotten, unstable

business—with nothing to tie to, nothing to rely on from start to finish, except yourself!

Clewesbury was played out, too, so far as excitement was concerned. Neither Gibbs nor Morris, for all his fine clothes and Republican Club leadership, dared put anything over in Clewesbury now, without the stamp of approval from the Van Wyck building. Nor any of these bluebloods of the club, either! Why, it made some such thing as United Clothing a necessity, if a man was to keep alive. A man had to have some excitement.

"It's only when we're secure that labour will strike," he remarked absently. "They haven't anything to gain from these little concerns that fail as soon as the union gets established. I suppose we'll have a strike the day the first dividend is declared."

"Or before." There was something significant in Stone's glance. "But we'll be ready for that. I've got enough on Stillman and Fechter and every man jack of their business agents to swing public opinion against them. They've got radical records, those fellows. I've had two men on Fechter for a couple of months. He wrote a pamphlet in Wales about fifteen years ago that will stand quoting—regular fire-eating stuff. So far there's no evidence of sexual irregularities, but we'll get that sooner or later. The public gets one hint of free love and Communism and they're done! A few thousand reprints of that pamphlet alone, sent to the newspapers, to show them the ideas of the strikers, and we won't have to worry. We won't even have to call in a labour spy detective agency."

"You're forehanded." There seemed to be a hint of skepticism in the tone.

"Well, the day's gone by when Dennis could boss a gang of men down at your potteries and pay what

he pleased, or fire 'em! You're up against organization—organization that's out for blood and all they can get."

"I know it." Van Wyck's voice was grim.

"The game has changed. They've got it unionized down to the last kike. Shop foremen, and chief clerks, and boards of arbitration and a Protocol that covers it all agreement by agreement."

"So long as the union can enforce it!"

"They can. They can hold their men, too. They can strike any minute, and bring in the public as the deciding voice. Why, the whole game is running that way now—strikes, arbitration, industrial commissions, court decisions and laws! I'll give you an instance:

"I handled the Wyandotte Iron Company for the Dainger interests. I had the record of every union leader on file the day the strike broke out. I published them in every paper in the country. I leased the Wyandotte *News* for six months and got Bill Graham on from New York to write the editorials. I tied up the state so tight labour couldn't open its mouth. We carried the election finally; and Governor Forbes did the right thing, and we got enough injunctions to win. From first to last we stood for the right of the workingman to work where he pleased —without dictation from a union. And that got the public! Where would we have been just locking 'em out? Unless we'd used spies—and that's dangerous."

He accepted the cigar Van Wyck proffered him and lit it swiftly.

"If Dainger had listened to me two years before, we wouldn't ever have had the strike at all! But no, he wouldn't. He didn't care about public opinion! If he had done the thing right, we would have had public opinion all cared for in advance and the union

leaders wouldn't have tried to strike. They are wise."

A kind of smile came over his face.

"I've handled the Transcontinental railroad for seven years now and if they have a wreck, ten to one the papers will play up the fact that the day coaches were steel and the injuries marvellously few because of it! How safe it is to travel on the Transcontinental! The public dotes on it."

He leaned forward.

"There's nothing haphazard about it. It's simply careful planning, a good clipping bureau, infinite attention to details, a corps of good assistants, and a little foresight and judgment. We've got a democracy here. If our brains don't run it—it's ignorance will run us! You can't buy the press—that's a Socialist bogeyman. You can't control editorial writers and reporters. You can't buy it at all. But you can get your version of things before the public everlastingly—if you've got brains. You can do a little toward keeping out labour's view of things, too. And the public believes what it reads finally, you know."

He reached for his hat and coat with the words.

"That's the sensible thing for you to do with United Clothing—put it in along with the other interests I handle. I might say that there's a sort of general movement on foot among the more far-seeing men along this line. I had a letter from Mr. Dainger this morning. It's all part of the game. See you later!"

Part of the game!

The phrase echoed and reëchoed in Mr. Van Wyck's brain as he drove downtown through the chilly November sunshine, giving him an odd feeling of immaturity, of inexperience, almost. Well, it was true, in a measure. Bounded by Clewesbury

and the Middle East—his operations. It hadn't occurred to him to look at the thing from a country-wide point of view. But that was what these manufacturer's associations, and Chambers of Commerce and Wall Street directors were doing. By God, this Stone had brains. Public opinion was the ultimate battleground. The man was right there, anyhow.

No matter how far off he might be on the war!

It was a little different kind of public opinion, however, that was engaging the attention of Forrester Stone at that same moment, as he drove off toward the Pontiac Hotel.

No, it did no harm, he was thinking, to rattle the dread skeleton of labour once in a while and trot out the power of the people! These capitalists liked to sink back and take it easy in a fool's paradise. But what sort of public opinion was there in Clewesbury about taking another man's wife out to lunch? No one cared in New York; no one knew it! But this city was probably different. Not on Congress Avenue, perhaps. Society there seemed to have its usual disregard of bourgeois conventions. But was the town small enough to have it make any difference to business men? The chances were that Nancy Carpenter did not think much about it, nor care. But it might make some difference to him.

And yet there were a thousand reasons to explain this affair! Just simply his relationship to her father was surely enough. And certainly no one could complain of a single tête-à-tête lunch at the Pontiac, in full view of the world. Who really cared what Clewesbury thought, anyhow!

She had on a different dress and dark furs, he noticed as he came in the lobby and she rose to greet

him from one of the big, upholstered chairs back by the Pompeian Room. Did she dress according to mood or weather?

According to mood, he decided a few minutes later—she had a decidedly scornful tone in her voice to-day!

"This is quite a treat to me," he told her.

"Why, what do you do? Always wander down your selfish moral path to success?" she inquired.

"Would you prefer the path of folly?" he retorted gravely.

"Just a little folly," she averred. "Wouldn't you—really?"

"Maybe," he said inscrutably. After all, there was no reason why he should reveal his ideas to her on such short acquaintance. She meant by folly probably only defiance of the rule of convention, of social observances in Clewesbury—mere youthful rebellion against anything that interfered with the pleasure at hand. She would be just as conventional as her grandmother, if occasion arose! And she had an exceptionally exasperating mood on to-day.

"I suppose you judge everything by your business, don't you?" she asked. "You wouldn't do anything that would interfere with that?"

"Depending on the reason," he replied as evenly as he could. The shaft brought a little flush to his cheeks. That was his usual criterion, but why should he allow her to insult him about it?

"You're like Father," she remarked.

"Success comes high," he admitted. "It's a battle."

"I suppose it is," she assented, with a perceptible change of tone. "I suppose you have been fighting one long, continuous battle all your life."

"More or less," he admitted.

"Did you start in New York?"

"No," he told her. "In the usual home town—Vermont this time."

"And there hasn't ever been a fairy princess?"

"No," he said slowly.

"But——" she began, and stopped.

"But what?"

"But you must have known some girls?" she hinted.

"The usual amount," he admitted. "Summer girls, college house-party girls, home-town girls—and New York girls."

"Tell me about the New York girls," she begged.

For a moment he felt silly. Tell her about his conquests, when he didn't have any! He had had no establishments up the Hudson, with a wife out on Long Island, no mistress in a West End Avenue apartment, either; not even any Ziegfeld chorus girl on his list! His amorous adventures, indeed, had come to an end once he had attained a certain amount of success. He had feared lest, somehow, someone should find a joint in his armour. Plenty of women in New York one could have for the plucking. But what of the hold such a woman would have on him, what of the resultant neglect of the climb toward power? No man in New York attained the heights without incessant striving! Women were not worth it. They were like flowers in a florist's window—good only to enjoy for a brief instant, like this vivid creature before him. They were not part of the battle.

Why was it they always wanted to hear about the other women a man had known?

"But there's nothing to tell," he said.

"Oh," she cried in her disappointment, "I don't believe it! I thought you would be so interesting—and there would be no reason why we

couldn't tell each other things! And there were so many things I wanted to ask you about!"

"But there's nothing to prevent that," he remonstrated. She was like some appealing child!

"Only there is," she pointed out complainingly. "You're a pig!"

"On the contrary——" he began.

But she would have none of it.

"Just a pig," she cried hotly. "And I'm sorry I came!"

He watched her gather up her things in something like consternation. Why, Great Scott, one could not fight with young ladies in public! Was it possible his mere refusal could stir her so?

"Do sit down," he begged her.

"I won't," she retorted. It did no harm to pretend to be angry once in a while.

"But why not?" he asked in something like bewilderment. He was not used to Nancy!

"Because I'm not going to have luncheon with you now," she cried.

"That's ridiculous," he said. "Sit down."

He had risen, too, but she paid no attention to him.

"I'm going," she said.

"You're not. You're going to sit down," he said. For just an instant he looked around their quiet corner, concealed from the salon by the palms and the high square pillar. And then he made his decision. No one could see them at all!

"Sit down," he said roughly. And he put both hands on her shoulders and returned her to her seat with almost unnecessary force. That was the way to deal with some girls!

"Oh!" she said. Her eyes were like storm clouds.

"But wait just an instant, my dear girl," he said. She was fixing her hat with little hurried motions.

"I didn't mean to insult you, or be unpleasant—or anything——"

"Your idea of politeness, I suppose," she retorted, looking straight at him.

"I simply meant that I had nothing exciting to tell—nothing you would call unusual or wildly tragic! Just reflect on that for a second!"

"Oh," she said.

"That's all I meant," he said earnestly. "I swear I meant nothing else."

"But there's been a reason?" she queried suddenly.

"Well, I haven't known many New York girls," he began. "But I've been acquainted with a good many as they came out each year, and——"

"And——" she prompted him.

Well, he told her then. Poverty first. Poverty and hard work in that small Vermont town where he had started. Poverty, while he worked his way through college. Poverty, while he lived in one room in Boston and sold bonds. Poverty first, then ambition—the beginnings of a career. Newspapers in Worcester, in Hartford, the publicity office of the New England Southern. And then New York and his own business.

Where had there ever been time for women in all that?

It was an exciting and highly satisfactory affair, that luncheon, Nancy told the Pirate Cat when she came home about four o'clock, and rumpled the just-awakened, indignant cat on the divan. They had had a scrumptious quarrel and after that he had been as docile as could be! There was something very different about him, too, compared to the youths of the Georgian! He gave you the sense of viewing history, somehow; of catching a glimpse of tremendous forces at work on a broad canvas! And he

had told her all about himself. He had even broken an engagement somewhere in order to bring her down here.

Did not the Pirate Cat think that an excellent beginning? Would he not be properly humbled in time?

She put any other view of the thing from her as she went into dinner with David a little later.

Why, this gave her something just as exciting as he found Kerrigan Street, and did not hurt any one, either! What difference could just one luncheon a week make, especially as they had chosen the Thursdays, that day when David was always out at the General Hospital and so could not have lunch downtown anyway?

It was the beginning of her affair with Forrester Stone—that affair which progressed rather harmlessly all through November while the dead flies in Moynihan's windows spoke mournfully of autumn on Kerrigan Street, and the leaves out Congress Avenue fell from the trees with a gentle swish on the wet pavements at night. A slightly speculative look in Andrew Van Wyck's eyes, perhaps, as he remarked on her unfailing attendance at luncheon or downtown; a dim idea in David's mind that she seemed to be enjoying herself a little more than usual; and a slightly irritating suspicion on Preck Addams's part that she was not always listening any more when he held forth before the wood fire.

But that was the only result worth mentioning, if we except Aunt Hat. That lady set forth her opinion with a vigour that stunned her mild sister.

"What she needs is a thrashing!"

"Why, Hat!" her sister exclaimed.

But Harriet Carpenter was in no mood to be smoothed.

"Don't 'why Hat' me," she retorted. "I'm not a fool!"

"But I'm sure that Nancy is perfectly happy."

"All the worse then," Hat retorted. "I saw her again at the Century Club this noon with that smart Aleck, Preck, this time. He knew what I thought, too, for all of his impudent wink! It's the third man this week that I've seen her with, counting that black-haired Stone from New York. What kind of a marriage do you call that?"

"But she'd never leave Davie for either of them!"

"Not if she can make fools of them all!" Hat retorted. "But do you think that looks as if she were entranced with her husband? He'd better quit thinking of Dagoes and pay some attention to his wife!"

And yet for Nancy just then the affair was still only mischievous adventure. No one could tell what a man like Forrester Stone would do, once he was finally humbled and completely enthralled! He might do all kinds of things—dramatic, exciting, blood curdling! But still that only made the affair all the more thrilling, did it not? It would not be any fun if the humbling were to be tame and prosaic, as if he were to say, "Oh," and go away! Of course, there was the danger of fire—for him! But that did not imply that there was any danger of fire for her as well. That was foolish.

She was married.

That was as far as she had gotten in those evenings of mid-winter, when the rehearsals for "Egypt" were under way—the great frolic of youthful society in Clewesbury, those yearly performances in the Lyric Theatre for the General Hospital Fund. In the apartment, Kitty Sassoon and Preck Addams and Kenny Watson waxed eloquent about them as soon as January was over.

"Aw, come on, Dave, make a fool of yourself just once more—I mean in public," Preck insisted before the wood fire on Kerrigan Street.

"Do take a part, even if it's just a tiny one," Kitty urged.

"No one has ever forgotten your Polar Bear," Kenny Watson pointed out.

"Nan has got to be in it, anyway," Preck reminded him. "She's our best Cleopatra—the show this year is 'Egypt'!"

"If I only saw how I could," David regretted.

"But you can if you want to, Dave," Nancy remonstrated.

"Just a little part," Kitty teased.

In the end he capitulated.

"All right," he agreed finally. "Put us down for the thing. Give me a boatman's part, or something like that, and let Nan carry the family to fame!"

"Fine!" cried Preck.

That was how David got in the cast.

It was Nancy who told Stone about it a few days later.

"I'm going to be Cleopatra," she said gaily. "It's our last year, I suppose. The débutantes will try to run it next year. Why don't you be something, a camel driver or something, that won't take much time but will give you the fun?"

"I don't know," he said quizzically. "What's David going to do?"

"Have a small part," she replied. "Though you know how he is—he never comes!"

It was an odd glance that Stone gave her at that.

"Why, I think I will," he said. "There's no use being an outsider here forever."

Why shouldn't he go the whole way if he expected to get any real fun out of the affair? If he expected to enjoy himself in Clewesbury? These amateur

theatricals always afforded many chances for tête-à-têtes!

They were gay little parties that Nancy introduced him to then, those rehearsals at the Edmunds' and the Osborns' where they watched their acquaintances and friends make themselves pleasantly ridiculous; and then went down to the Pontiac or the Georgian or even to the Chinese Pagoda for a little supper to top off the evening. A distinct kind of flair for Nancy, somehow, in thus flinging Forrester Stone headlong at her friends and seeing if any of them could take him away! A little flutter of excitement in her heart, too, whenever she thought of his apparent subjection. There was certainly no indifference in his eyes when he talked to her, or watched her trying to enslave, as per stage directions, Doug Everdell in the Edmunds' library. His eyes held a very different expression from that cold glance he had kept fastened on his old "Europe Since 1815" in the dim light-dappled library on Morpeth Terrace! Was she really capturing him?

That thought sent a ripple of excitement down her spine all through that week just before the two performances in the Lyric—until the arrival of the costumes and scenery drove it from her mind.

"I think my costume is terrible," she confided to Kitty a week later in the seclusion of that young lady's boudoir.

"There isn't enough of it for that," Kitty smiled.

"I know it," she retorted. "Do you think I'll be arrested?"

"Why, it isn't very different from some of the new dresses," Kitty said at once.

"Except that it lacks!" lamented Nancy.

"It does lack," Kitty admitted.

She appealed to David that evening before dinner in the apartment.

"They've come home," she told him. "And one of them I simply can't wear—I'll show you."

He inspected her a few moments later.

"You can't wear the gold armour one, anyhow," he said emphatically. "You might as well come out in a dinner set."

"That's what I think," she said.

"The others are all right—they're fine."

"I'll get some other kind of armour," she said thoughtfully.

"But don't go by me," David pointed out cheerfully. "The girls are the best judges—the other people in the show. Ask them!"

She held the doubtful costume in her hand after dinner, after he had gone to the hospital, inspecting, with a kind of regret, the soft Nile green of the skirt and the flashing inlay of the breast plates. It was beautiful—more beautiful than the others. The kind of dress Cleopatra must have worn in her youthful, slender days! She held it up on her shoulders before the cheval glass in her bedroom after David had gone, too. Couldn't it be fixed somehow?

She slipped out of her clothes and tried on the other two. They were good, very effective, theatrically—but not like this one! She tried it on once more over the dainty underpinnings that went with it, and admired the effect in the long mirror. Why, the effect with the gold headpiece and the golden breastplates over the peacock feather bodice made her look exactly like some youthful Egyptian princess.

It was really wonderful.

She almost started at the sound of the doorbell, and then put on her fur coat hurriedly, and went lightly to the door, holding the high collar about her.

It was Forrester Stone she saw.

"Oh," she said. "Come in. I'm not quite

ready. My three costumes came and I've been trying them on."

He put down his hat and took off his heavy coat carefully.

"That so?" he remarked. "How are they?"

"Why, two of them are fine," she said hesitatingly. "I've—I've just been looking over the other one again—it seems—well——"

"Not quite right?" he queried. He was lighting a cigarette.

"I've got it on," she said with an odd trace of embarrassment.

"Oh," he said, "let's see it!"

For an instant she hesitated—and then his nonchalant, cool tone decided her and she slipped off the fur coat and flung it on the divan.

"By Jove," he said. "It's—it's wonderful!"

There was a curious tremble in his voice that struck her at once.

"Do you think it's—all right?" she inquired.

"You mean daring?" he said.

"Yes," she nodded.

"Well, it's that, all right," he said. And his coolness seemed to have returned to him completely.

She stood quite still for an instant, and then she went toward him.

"Don't you think I make a real Cleopatra?" she asked with a little sweep of her arms. "Don't you envy Doug?"

"Not when Phyllis gets him back of the wings," he laughed.

But his hands were quite tense, Nancy noticed, and he had put down his cigarette.

"I don't know whether to feel silly or not."

"Why?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know whether someone is going to say 'Put her out!' or not!"

"I don't think any one will say that," he replied a little hoarsely.

"You think they will—like it?" she queried.

It was all she could do not to touch him with the little fan she held. All the emotional abandon of her held her in thrall at the moment, pushing her on to conquest. But in Forrester Stone something seemed to snap.

"By God," he said, "you are exquisite!"

And he seized her in his arms, peacock feathers, crown, and all.

"Forrester!" she cried. "Let me go! What are you thinking of?"

But he had done it at last, he was thinking triumphantly! He had done it—and she would not be able to stop him.

He did not even seem to hear her.

"I'm going to kiss you," he said. And he bent her over on the side of the divan, disregarding her struggles and the woeful ruin of the peacock feathers. She never forgot the stunning surprise of it.

For an instant she wished for a dagger.

And then she felt rather faint. "You're crazy," she said abruptly as she struggled loose. "Let me go!"

"Not until I've kissed you," he said. Nor did he until he had kissed her, and she had torn herself away and slammed shut the door of her bedroom.

CHAPTER IX

In Which Nancy Discovers That Marriage Has Not Altered Her Character Despite Her Hopes That It Might

She would not let him go home with her from the rehearsal.

"No," she said with an inscrutable look in her eyes, as they stood in the broad tiled hall where the departing players made a fine confusion of good-byes, and trailing scarves, and canes, and fur coats, and opera shoes. "I'm going home with Preck!"

"Then I'll see you to-morrow at noon," he said.

"Maybe," she murmured, half to herself.

"Maybe?" he retorted in surprise. "Why, it's the last rehearsal before the dress one!"

"I had forgotten," she said simply. "Good-night."

She went down the broad walk toward the motors, shining black against the snowy lawns, a nameless confusion still in her. Why, the stunning surprise of that instant by the divan bade fair to last indefinitely. No definite thought, no clear emotion had emerged from the welter which that instant had let loose in her—and it was five hours since!

"Do you mind if I don't talk?" she asked Preck as they started.

"Silence is golden," he remarked philosophically.

She could not carry on a conversation, indeed. It had been hard enough merely to rehearse her part

to-night, the words and scenes had seemed to vanish from her completely more than once, as if she had become suddenly afflicted with the worst kind of stage fright. Her knees had gone weak once or twice, too, just as they had in the bedroom when she had sat down and stared at the ruin of the peacock feathers in the mirror while her thoughts ran riot. He had kissed her and it had thrilled her to the depths of her soul!

That was all she could think of.

That was all she had been able to think of since. She hadn't humbled, hadn't tried to humble him. All that was true. And yet that somehow seemed absolutely unimportant, as if it had sunk out of sight beside the overwhelming import of the emotional fact. She had kept absolute silence all through their drive from Kerrigan Street to the Edmunds' because of that fact. She had not answered a single question he put to her, either during the drive or during the intermission between her appearances on the big Turkish rug which did duty as stage in the library. She might let him kiss her again, if she let loose the floodgates of conversation, of explanation, apology, regret, and emotion. She did not know what she might do.

And she was married!

She was married, and it hadn't made any difference in her feelings in the least. She might let him kiss her again in the motor if he drove her home and that exquisite thrill overwhelmed her senses! What kind of thing was that—what kind of emotion, what kind of idiot, what kind of marriage?

David was sitting in the big chair by the dying fire, she saw at once, as she came in and deposited her coat on the divan—asleep, waiting up for her. The mere fact gave her a lump in her throat as she stood over him a moment. There was utter

weariness in the way his right hand, with its brown skin and scar where the Italian had knifed him, lay relaxed, hanging down from the chair arm. He looked like a big boy—a big boy asleep, waiting for his mother to come in.

She kneeled down and pressed his hand to her breast with a sudden movement.

"I'm home, David," she said. And there was a catch in her voice.

"Oh," he said sleepily.

He looked at her with pleasant, half-closed eyes for an instant.

"No wonder they cast you for Cleo, Nan," he said. "You're a wonder!"

"Don't say that," she said with odd abruptness.

"It's true, my Nannie!" he retorted.

He wound up the clock then, and set his favourite Kewpie with its face to the window.

"So she can see the dawn," he explained whimsically to Nancy. "Let's go to bed, or we won't be able to get up for breakfast! Was it a good rehearsal?"

Long after he had fallen asleep, however, Nancy still lay awake, listening to the sounds that came in from the icebound street: the cracking of the bare boughs of the black trees, the guttural conversations of unseen passersby, the occasional roar of a motor, the sound of a drunken man singing at the top of his lungs on some distant avenue, the drifts of snow blowing by the window sill.

No, she would never be able to tell David, she decided at length. She could not mention the thing without confessing that she had let Forrester Stone kiss her, and that would hurt him unbearably. It was something with which she would have to deal alone—just as everything always had been. How curious it was that everyone lived like that—each

person alone in a tiny, lonely cabin of the mind, always stepping fully dressed to the porch to hold conversation. Was it because there were strange things like this inside all the cabins?

It was not until just before she fell asleep that a really startling fact occurred to her. Was this the way divorces began, she wondered then with a cold stopping of the heart? But she put that from her with what was almost a panic. No, David was the sweetest thing in the world, and he adored her! She reached out and touched his hand at the thought. He would never desert her. And a little wandering light through the blowing curtain, from the street lamp, found tears in her eyes.

Morning brought with it the practical problem. She studied that all during breakfast and afterward, when David had gone to his study in the Brotherhood House, while she dressed. What should she do with Forrester Stone?

"Do you realize that you haven't spoken two words to me since—since last evening?" he asked her, as they sat on the stairs at the Edmunds' a little later, watching Preck blowing out imaginary whiskers in his astrologer's scene on the Turkish rug.

"What is there to say?" she countered.

"Well——" he began, and fell silent.

"It only remains to see that it doesn't happen again," she said abruptly.

"I don't think——" he began.

"It mustn't," she said decisively.

"I suppose not," he assented reluctantly. It seemed at moments, indeed, as if he must have dreamed that passionate kiss by the divan. And yet, it had happened! It—the whole thing had obsessed him ever since. It had been like having some scene from the Arabian Nights turn suddenly

into pulsing reality. The effect of her in that costume, the warmth and passionate charm of her, had wrought a kind of ecstasy in him—well, yes, had driven him mad. He must be mad, of course. He of all men! Mad over a woman—and not even a woman of the world. Just a young girl of an inland city dressed in an amateur theatrical dress!

She had been attractive from the beginning, although he had tried to deceive himself. She must have been, or he would not be sitting here in the Edmunds' house, watching an amateur rehearsal at twelve-thirty on a Tuesday morning, his mind filled with only one thing: why had she let him kiss her—if it were never to happen again?

For it would happen again. Such things always happened again and kept on happening, once emotion caught the will by the throat. He would kiss her until her husband knew it, most likely—just as it had happened to Henry Stoddard and Amelie Frothingham at Rye. And he would not give a continental! He had stifled himself to climb the ladder, and he could do what he liked now. Thirty-eight! He would not live forever. It would be worth all Clewesbury just to get her, no matter what old Van Wyck thought. He could wind the old man round his finger, anyway, except where finance was concerned. You couldn't fool him on a dollar! But he followed like a lamb in everything else. He had him under his thumb, just as he had Ernest Dainger.

The girl probably was simply afraid, too—held down by the weight of conventionality and bourgeois bosh that always held sway in these provincial cities of the Middle East. That was all. In New York, there would be nothing to it. But here it was formidable, enough to keep in line even such a little Hun. What she needed was a master instead of that big, easy-going doctor. With a

master, she would outshine all Long Island and Fifth Avenue. What was the game for, if you couldn't take what you wanted when you'd got to the top?

He watched her then, as she went through her part rather listlessly.

"You're going to kiss me again, you know," he said coolly as she took her seat beside him once more.

"Oh, am I?" she retorted. It was a goad to her pride, in a way, the knowledge that the past made it seem likely.

"Yes," he said.

"Let me know when," she said as contemptuously as she could.

"Before Friday," he told her. She would kiss him before he went to New York for the week.

"I see," she returned passively.

"I'm hard hit, Nan," he said abruptly. Somehow he hadn't meant to say it, either. "No wonder they cast you for the part of Cleopatra!"

"Don't!" she said.

"But——" he began.

"Don't!" she said. "Don't say that again!"

And he saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"I won't," he said slowly. After all, she probably didn't like her position—tied to that man. And —and there was probably more to her than he knew or suspected. . . . He hadn't meant anything personal.

He had given Nancy a decided weapon, nevertheless, had he but realized it. Why, there would be only the dress rehearsal to-night, and then the two performances, and it would be Friday! That was the thought uppermost in her mind, as she saw David appear at last in the doorway, and her eyes lit up. She would only have to keep up this queer attitude of silence and passivity until Friday and then she

would be free for a whole week to get clear of this whirling maze into which she had fallen.

In a week she would be able to decide just what she would dare to do and just what she wouldn't—just what plan she must adopt to crush this new danger which had assailed her so unexpectedly in the hour of triumph.

She took out the rejuvenated Cleopatra costume with a kind of curiosity a few hours later, a shame-faced thrill in her heart. Well, it had been wonderfully exciting, anyway. And—and yet it had been wrong! Just why, she wondered? Certainly David had not been injured—nor had Stone—nor had she herself! And yet somehow, someone must have been injured before it became a real wrong! Aunt Minnie would say, of course, that the Holy Ghost was in her, and that was wronged! But then Aunt Minnie was old-fashioned—and the thing sounded just like words. More likely there was a little devil inside her who liked to be satisfied and felt now as if he were stung!

That was just as reasonable as the Holy Ghost idea.

Her eyes danced a little as she tried on the dresses, and then packed them in the big bag, and got ready to go to the theatre. Well, there was no sense in being a gloom because of a kiss, anyway! That didn't do any one any good. A kiss wasn't the end of the world, either. So long as it didn't happen again. No, no! Mustn't happen again.

It didn't happen, either, all through that long and rather tedious dress rehearsal, while Kenny Watson forgot his lines, and Preck quarrelled with the professional stage director on from New York, and the director informed Preck he was blown up like a balloon and Preck refused to state what he thought of the director, and the wind blew Elise Edmunds' dress,

and even Doctor Musson said, dear, dear. Much like all those dress rehearsals in the Lyric Theatre, that especial one for "Egypt" was, with both sexes rigged up in unaccustomed finery and ridiculously scant dresses, and the legs of the slaves showing with startling effect even to the twenty-third row.

But only two opinions about Nancy!

She was wonderful! And she was really shocking!

No one should act like that, Aunt Hat declared in the row back by the pillars. It was not supposed to be the real stage! And then, too, this was not the Nile. People had improved since then. It showed the danger of the theatre. Society might find some better way to raise the money for its hospitals than making spectacles of its young girls, even though that second-class director said she made the show!

An unusually gay Nancy she was that night and the next, indeed, if gaiety meant playing through her part with curious abandon and laughter, and seeking out the largest crowd whenever she was not "on." And yet there were few moments when she was not watching Forrester Stone to see just how he was taking it. Only an effort to escape that sense of inevitable encounter with the silent figure of Forrester Stone—that was what most of those two evenings were to her.

A kind of exultation in her, indeed, when they sat around the long table at the Pontiac, afterward, celebrating the triumph of the first night, and she realized that Forrester had not contrived to be alone with her an instant. No, she had managed to be with Kitty or Elise, or Preck or—or someone every minute. And David had been a dear, for once, and had actually come and stayed through everything until the bitter end.

She did not see exactly how Forrester was going

to manage it, either, she told herself the last night, as the sound of the violins came floating back into the curious, raw smell of the stage. There was only the final dance out at the Country Club, with the firs and cedars around the shining hall, before the whole thing was over. And Forrester would have to go before that.

She sat in her dressing room quite quietly at the thought, her hands in her lap, her eyes upon the mirror which gave back the golden orange of her silken wrap. Well, it would be quite a let-down after this performance—when he had gone to New York, and there was left only the apartment. It was a let-down almost now, in these fifteen minutes when she was not needed on the stage.

"Hello!"

She turned quite swiftly at the voice—and her heart beat faster with a curious excitement.

"Why, hello," she returned, imitating the light mockery of the tone. "Do camel drivers come into Cleopatra's dressing room?"

"This camel driver has to catch a New York train in just an hour," Forrester said imperturbably.

"Oh, isn't that too bad?" she said lightly.

He had sat down now, on the little bench along the wall, his long robe pulled about him.

"They're all busy, anyhow," he explained carelessly.

In the silence, she nodded.

"I haven't thought of anything else except you, since two nights ago," he said slowly.

"You mustn't," she said.

"Why not?" he asked with just a hint of savageness. "Aren't thoughts free?"

"Not some kinds," she answered.

"This isn't just a joke with me," he said abruptly. "I've come to kiss you good-bye," he added.

She rose, trembling, and yet aware that outside the door lay safety.

"You daren't," she said. Her eyes were strangely bright.

"I've got to," he said. "To keep me going for a week!"

She edged toward the door at that—was it just a feint, or did she really mean to carry it out?

"You can't," she said.

"Don't you want me to?" he asked.

"You—you mustn't," she replied.

But that was an evasion, he saw at once.

"I—I love you—I want you to understand," he said fiercely. And he drew her to him with arms of steel.

Ah, just an instant! A wonderful instant!

"Good-bye," he said.

And he kissed her again swiftly, and went out the door, leaving her by the mirror, a slim figure of lily white slashed with orange, and eyes of darkest gray, in which, deep and sombre, burned a tiny, distant, golden light.

That was the first time that a realization of the deadly seriousness of the affair awoke in Nancy. Why, this was no mere flirtation, no simple indulgence of the imps of conquest, she told herself. He had said he loved her! And he had kissed her. And she had just stood and let him; and passion had overpowered him! And her! What was she thinking of?

She listened to the congratulations of Congress Avenue and read the notices in the Clewesbury papers with that question eternally in the back of her mind, the next day.

It was incredible that it should have happened, she told herself; that she should not care—that she should want it to happen again. A terrible madness seemed

to rise in her when she thought of seeing him again. A mad desire to feel his embrace once more. It was only possible to forget it completely when David was around, or when she was doing something fairly exciting. How had that happened so suddenly?

"Won't you be glad to have me home again for a little?" she asked David at supper.

"I will!" he said promptly.

"I have hardly kept the place decent since that old 'Egypt' began," she added.

"It's looked all right to me," he remarked.

"You're a dear, Dave," she said penitently. "Anything would look all right to you. I felt like a criminal last night when I went to the theatre and saw your rubbers by the door. You don't ever remember them unless I remind you, do you?"

"They are rather elusive," he said, "those rubbers."

"And what's become of that cape of yours?" she inquired.

"Why—I suppose it's around," he said.

"Dave!" she exclaimed.

"What?" he asked calmly.

"What did you do with it?"

"Why, I let Mrs. Tomazolli take it for an evening," he said uncomfortably.

"And who might Mrs. Tomazolli be?" she inquired.

"She's a lady who lives over on Grand Street," he replied. "She came to take the baby home night before last, and——"

"And what?" she demanded.

"Why, she didn't have anything handy to carry him in—so I—I loaned her the cape. No doubt it is over in the study now."

"Unless you gave it to her," Nancy said sternly. "Did you?"

"I—I don't think so," said David.

"You did!"

"Maybe I did," he admitted.

She rose and kissed him.

"You're a dear," she said, with sudden emotion.

Yes, he was a dear—a wonderful, sweet old dear, she decided as she picked up the apartment next morning. He had worn all his shirts one after the other, and there was a new one on the chair by the door—one that looked suspiciously as if he had just bought it. He would probably never send them to the laundry unless she did it for him! He was curiously absent-minded, never apparently sure of anything except his pipe, and what those patients of his had in the way of diseases. What on earth would he think of her if he knew what passions possessed her? What desires she had had? And still had—if she admitted the truth.

She spent the next few days in a sort of orgy of repentance because of that. Why, they had not had Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan down to dinner for weeks, and had not been up to Fitzhugh Street, either! They owed the people over at the Brotherhood House many parties—Miss Haynes, and Vera, and Miss Lublin. They had not yet had Doctor Musson to dinner, although it was more than two years since they were married! What had become of Anton Fechter and that big, yellow-haired Mr. McKim—the one who had been a preacher out in North Dakota? Had they stopped coming because they felt funny about "Egypt" and all that gaiety that had been going on?

"Why, I've seen Fechter every day," David told her. "McKim, too, when he has been around. You know, McKim is a curious man—he appears to be a kind of counsel, adviser, of the Amalgamated. I haven't been so busy as you have, you know."

There wasn't a trace of irony in his tone, either,

she decided, as she prepared the Sunday night supper for Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan. She had had a bigger part in the play, that was all he meant.

Three days she spent in the orgy of repentance, and then she hailed with enthusiasm the approach of David's birthday. The telephone conversations, the visits to the grocer's, the elaborate fictions to David, all gave her a sort of relief, a sense of making up to him for the desires she had acknowledged.

She almost laughed that next afternoon while she made her little purchases downtown. Why, David had been almost embarrassed, pathetically so, when he had realized that this was his birthday—thirty-four! And then he had deprecated the clamour! His birthday was not worth it!

Well, of course it wasn't, she had agreed ironically. But she had made him promise to give her the evening just the same. He would have another surprise when he came home at seven, too! She spent hurried hours over that as the afternoon wore away and she set the table for the grand occasion. But she had it all set and arranged and little Maria safely hidden in the kitchen, and she herself dressed to receive Preck and Kitty and the others long before it was time. Once she did pause, and a shadow crept into her eyes—as she put away the Nile green dress, and arranged her hair to suit the black evening dress with the gold trimming. But that passed. As she sat in the light of the Persian porcelain lamp, indeed, just a little before seven, her eyes that warm golden gray in the lamplight, she gave an unmistakable impression of youth and happiness and domesticity.

Only as she answered the telephone did she give a little frown of apprehension. Surely, David's patients might give him just one evening at home, without breaking their legs, or having their babies, or contracting appendicitis. Or had Forrester Stone re-

turned? He was due to-day. A shiver passed over her at that.

But it was David himself.

"Oh, you can't come, I know it!" she cried at once.

"That's just it, I'm afraid, Nan." His voice had an odd mixture of regret and strain in it, unmistakable even at that distance, as if some picture before him would not allow him to give his full attention to the conversation.

"But it's—it's your birthday, Dave," she said.

"I know it, Nan," he said. "But—but I fear this is life or death, this time—and I'll have to get home when I can—you'll understand when I see you"—his voice filled with uneasiness, strangled impatience, —"I haven't a second. I wanted to telephone you myself, because I knew you did expect me to-night——"

"But there's a party——"

Well, she wanted to say it, she wanted to cry it passionately, so that he would come. But she caught herself in time. She must not be selfish—and perhaps he could get home later.

"But you'll come as soon as you can——" she cried before he could close off.

"Quite late." His voice sounded very distant. "Good-bye."

And he had gone, and only the lifeless instrument lay in her hand.

She greeted the gay party with apologetic laughter as they streamed in a few minutes later. Yes, this was what it was to be a doctor's wife! Not even birthdays were sacred—it was one step worse than the golf widow, because illness did not cease with winter, and the wormcasts on the greens! But perhaps David would come later—and the surprise party become a surprise.

She kept that hope during the first few minutes—as long as the supper lasted, in fact, putting away for him a small selection from the supper when it was over and the party had adjourned to the fireplace, with talk of "Egypt" and the movies. But it was only a very small hope, easily overcome by the remembrance of the past experiences when an operation or an emergency case had meant midnight hours at the hospital or over in the dispensary at the Brotherhood House. No, he would not be in before morning, most likely.

The conviction gave her a curious sense of neglect, of loneliness, even in the midst of the pleasant conversation and chaff of the little gathering. Preck never had any such pressing engagements, nor did Kenny Watson, nor any of the other men. Their business stopped at five-thirty, and they came home—after a little session at the club. Most of the young wives could always count on their husbands for the evening. Why was it necessary for David to be quite so indefatigable, quite so conscientious? These patients of his were not people of consequence. He could not attend to them all, anyway. It was partly that curious attachment of his to an idea!

Would Forrester Stone be that way, she wondered, staring straight at Preck?

The thought brought back with an unexpected rush the bottled-up emotion of that forbidden topic.

The atmosphere of the apartment seemed almost insupportable of a sudden as the party prepared to depart.

"I think——" she began. And then stopped, in the midst of her good-night. No, if she said that, Preck would insist upon staying, or upon driving her around the quiet midnight streets, with their banks of snow and clear black crystal roadways.

She would rather be alone, drive by herself for a breath of the outdoors, without the necessity of conversation. She had had enough meaningless conversation!

"Good-night," she cried them all down the narrow stairs and out into the keen night.

"Good-night!" their voices floated back.

She stood a minute by the open door. Then she closed it, drew hastily the big screen before the dying embers of the fire, and sought her fur coat in the big closet with its rough white shelves—irresistible reminder of Ezekiel Clewes's bygone day. Before the white front doorway with its sign, "Dr. Carpenter," done in gold, she pulled her coat even closer about her throat, conscious of the still night and the dim lights behind the cloudy panes of the tenements, here and there glittering splashes of cold white speaking of late storekeepers at work under garish welsbachs.

Relief came to her as she drove over the railroad bridge a few minutes later. Well, there was something of romance, of far places and wide spaces in the freight yards, anyway, lying dim and gray under the stars, the lines of shining silver making a fairy network of the rails, instead of the grim, commercial roadway they seemed in daylight. A kind of relief, too, in the long, quiet distance of Congress Avenue, stretching between the marching street lamps, far out to where the silent houses vanished in mere black shadows. These things helped.

Unusual emotion came to her as the gray bulk of St. Peter's came into view, bringing back of a sudden that memory of her father, standing on the steps staring after her, the day she was married. He must have had an unhappy life, forever alone in the house behind the snow-covered shrubbery.

She turned the corner, crunching the snow a little

on the side, and went slowly down the street, to catch a glimpse of the poplars against the bright, cold stars, to see if there was a light in that old library. Perhaps he was still in there to-night, doggedly finishing the history of the Roman Empire. It was just as the house came into view that she saw that someone was descending the steps, lighting a cigarette in the frosty air.

And her heart almost stopped.

It was Forrester, instinct told her with abrupt emotion.

Her car practically met him as he turned down the walk toward Congress Avenue. But she did not say anything. Something seemed to keep her dumb, staring at him from the darkness of the seat as if she waited for Fate to take charge of her existence, just where she had stopped.

He paused an instant, and then came toward her swiftly—silent until he had reached the car and put one foot upon the running-board.

"Why, hello," he said. His eyes seemed preternaturally deep—without trace of humour.

"I didn't mean to meet you," she said abruptly. She could not help it—the uppermost instinct in her seemed to be to justify herself, to deny any intent to gratify herself.

"I didn't think that—at this hour," he said, as if she had made the most ordinary remark in the world.

But she sat silent, her hands trembling a little beneath the heavy motor gloves.

"Are you going in?" he asked.

She hesitated just the fraction of a second, staring at the dark library window.

"No," she said.

Even then she did not ask him to get in. Not until it occurred to her what a complete betrayal it was—any one else——

"Can I take you down?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

He got in then, and turned toward her an instant, closing the door.

"I've missed you terribly," he said at once.

"Have you?" she replied. She had made no move to start the car.

"Yes," he said. And he leaned toward her.

"Nan," he said. And he took her in his arms, fur coat and all, the smell of cold fur mixing inextricably with the perfume of her hair.

"I can't help it, either," she said passionately.

And she buried her face in the soft fur of his coat.

CHAPTER X

Wherein We Listen to Some Tragic Reflections and Begin to Feel Sorry for Nancy

It was a tumultuous, storm-wrecked Nancy who watched the dawn creep into the cold bedroom on Kerrigan Street a few hours later. Little tight lines of anguish crept around her eyes where she lay staring at the ceiling, her hands on her breasts, her heart a kind of treadmill of endless contradictions and desires, of passionate memories and inescapable doom.

Marriage a refuge!

Well, she had doubted it instinctively, even back in the garden on Morpeth Terrace when there had seemed no other way. She had doubted it, too, when they had come back to Kerrigan Street, and the honeymoon days in Chicago lay behind her. She had doubted it from the first day that she had caught a glimpse of her own nature.

And the one kiss, in the motor on Morpeth Terrace, had blown away the last shred of belief like a mist. Emotion had caught at her throat, had taken possession of her soul just as if David had never been! Exquisite passion had enthralled her, as it had that night with David in the poplar-guarded garden. She had kissed Forrester with her whole soul. It had been no question of his kissing her and being tolerated or allowed! She had kissed him, let herself be crushed in his arms, confessed her complete abandonment in a perfect madness.

Marriage was nothing beside that fact.

Marriage had not changed her. It had merely altered the background of her existence, given her new scenery before which to play, changed the characters in her plot. She was the same person that she had been when she had played with Doug Everdell and Tuffy—the same person, only grown up to a more poignant rôle, a rôle that filled her with unsupportable doubts.

What a portrait of sinister shadows, of shifting lights, it made of her! With nothing stable, nothing everlasting deep down in the soul; but only a will-o'-the-wisp wind blowing her here, blowing her there, all her human relationships a moving, changing scene, like some great bazaar of Bagdad where nothing durable, granite or marble, is, except the shining skies themselves.

Was Forrester like that? And David? Did they think of people as mere jars of wine—thousands of varieties of intoxicating wine, to be tasted, drained, and emptied, and then the jar thrown aside for the next comer, until old age or sheer satiety brought down the drinker in the dust? Intolerable thought! And yet the green, cool seduction of each single jar! The colourful, amber liquid of this one here! The dark, velvet night of that distant vessel there! The dreams of romance contained in each single drop! Will not my mistress sip of life and love and laughter? Hear music and the Bacchanalian chant of passion! Catch each moment of rapture to her breast and hold it there before the night of death has fallen and the jars are gone forever!

Did David, Forrester, everyone feel like that, too, although they put it from them?

Why, it might be someone else with her, once Forrester had been drained and cast aside; someone else, and then still another, and another——

God in Heaven, just like her mother!

Utter fear came to her at that, and she rose with a shiver and went out into the gray kitchen. On the white table lay the empty dishes of the little supper she had saved for David the night before. How long ago that seemed! But he had eaten the food, eaten it all, she noticed. He had probably had nothing to eat since the luncheon on Fitzhugh Street until that early morning supper. He really did not seem to care about anything for himself.

"I'm so glad you're up!" she told him, almost hysterically, a little later. He seemed so wholesome, so solid, so granite-like, somehow, as he stood in the doorway of the kitchen and asked if he could not carry in the breakfast. He could not be a will-o'-the-wisp, too!

"I could have done with another hour," he remarked whimsically.

"But what did happen last night?" she asked him.

"I got a new secretary," he replied.

"No, really?"

"That was the result," he told her. "She's little, pale, and I think Irish, Murphy being the name!"

"But I thought you had an operation!" she exclaimed.

"I did," he admitted. "She was only a by-product. Someone pounded her brother over here in Moynihan's saloon. Some union labour scab argument—and I had to take him to the General Hospital and put fifteen stitches in his head."

"And take his sister for a secretary?"

"I took her home in the runabout." He drank his coffee reflectively. "By George, we don't realize what it is to be the underdog. She was living in a room about four feet square, more or less, under

the stairs in a tenement on Allen Street, where the water dripped down the wall from a bathroom on the floor above. There was a reddish brown shawl on some dirty sheets on a tumbledown sofa, a greenish sink by the one window, and a gas plate. That was home to her. She didn't have any job. She's been running a typewriter for some cloak contractor over on Grand Avenue—those tumbledown brick buildings. I told her I would give her a trial in the study if she would learn shorthand. She's coming to-morrow."

"But Miss Lublin——" Nancy began.

"She is going with Miss Haynes on the State Social Commission."

"Is Miss Haynes really going?"

"Next week," said David. "She's served her time down here, certainly, and they couldn't find any one better equipped."

"No," assented Nancy, her mind reverting instinctively to Miss Murphy. How did all these girls whom David met on Kerrigan Street look at him? Did any of them ever try to arouse his interest? Poverty had nothing to do with emotion —not much, anyway. Some of these women David saw might be connoisseurs in jars! "Is Miss Murphy pretty?" she asked abruptly.

"Why, just ordinarily, I imagine," he told her.

"Oh," she said.

Well, David probably would not know whether he was being imposed upon or not, she thought, as she watched him fold up his napkin and then kissed him good-bye. Miss Murphy could go through all sorts of antics and it probably would not occur to David either that they were for his benefit or that they meant anything in particular.

What a fine way that was to be! It gave one something real, almost tangible, to hang to.

She stared unseeingly at the table before her, aware of the unhappy contrast. Why, things with her appeared to be only a matter of circumstance. She could make fine resolutions and be, oh, so brave about carrying them out—until the time came really to do something. And then she was a creature of weakness and passion, without any will. She really seemed to deceive herself, too, about breaking with Forrester, for instance, when in the back of her mind there had lain during all the days of his absence the thought that when he did return she would see him. She had not made last night's opportunity—no. But she had taken advantage of it at once.

That was not sincerity, that was not a real effort to end a relationship that could not continue. A real effort could end it at once, of course—with one stroke! All she would have to do would be to follow out her original intention of humbling him. If she merely told him that she had tried to conquer him and had succeeded, and now he was repaid for his rudeness—why, anger and pride on his part would effectively end their relations. She would only have to attend then to the stifling of her own emotions.

Surely she owed David that much.

Tears filled her eyes as she picked up the apartment, and made the bed and sorted and put away the fresh laundry.

She hated this unhappy, mean little wall that seemed to have arisen between them! Didn't she have the strength to knock it down?

"I can't bear the deception of it," she told Forrester in the Georgian late that afternoon.

"I suppose not," he assented. No need to stress that, certainly!

"I wish I could just tell him everything!"

"Only you can't." Stone seemed to move uncomfortably at that prospect!

"No," she agreed sombrely. "He wouldn't understand——"

"No, he wouldn't," Stone agreed abruptly. What an extraordinary idea! It showed all over again how you could never tell about a woman.

"If I could see you—and not have any—anything!" she concluded pathetically. It was the first time she had admitted in words that there was any "anything" between them.

"You wouldn't like it," he declared.

She was silent for a moment.

"I would want to taste the jar all the time, I suppose," she said vaguely.

"Whatever that may mean," he said.

"Just an idea of mine," she said.

"Meaning, I suppose, that I am one of many!" he said humorously.

"Maybe!" she replied with a hint of mockery.

And yet the gaiety died soon enough. A kind of desperation in Stone for this white-throated, gray-eyed girl who sat in front of him with her elbows on the lamplit table. No halfway stops in him! She had confessed to passion already. What was the use then of regrets? She might have qualms about her husband, but that was natural, it did not alter the situation.

The question was: What were they going to do about it?

All his practical nature awoke at that thought, leaving fine-spun moralities to others.

"I wouldn't blame you—living in that gloomy place," he said abruptly.

"It's not so gloomy."

"You're not made for places like that. No one has a right to ask you—if it isn't necessary, if it doesn't have to be done. You're young only once."

The criticism of David affected Nancy oddly, indirect though the thing was.

"Well, it's David's life," she said.

"Exactly," he retorted. "Not yours."

"But he's only thinking of what he ought to do, I suppose," she pointed out.

"And not of you!" A futile sort of humanitarianism back of this husband of hers, perhaps, Stone decided. The man probably had a streak of sentiment in him, and it led him to try to achieve a little notoriety, a kind of distinction in that way. That desire to stand out from the crowd was in everybody. But there was no use trying to tell it to this passionate girl before him.

"I couldn't help thinking of what it would mean to have you with me in New York," he said abruptly. "The place seems made for you. A sort of gorgeous scene of romance—operas, theatres, shops!" He paused a moment. "But it's singularly empty without someone to share it with."

"Aren't there any girls in New York?" she asked.

"No Nancys," he told her.

She dropped her eyes at that. Well, of course that was plain lovemaking. It made her heart beat a little faster. He was so obviously sincere. And yet it was just the beginning of the same old thing. The thrill of it would captivate her in a second, and another afternoon would have passed and she would have done nothing about ending their relations. Where could there ever be any place better than this, either? So public, and plain to view. He could not crush down her resolution here by any such methods as he had used in the apartment and the dressing room.

If only she could hold to her course and withstand just the few moments of bitterness, the thing would be done.

"I always had an idea that New York was just filled with—well, with Nancys," she said with fine insinuation.

"Meaning you are a—well," he hesitated. "Well, a flirt?"

"One never knows," she told him. "After all the movies!"

"No, one never does, of course," he admitted. He stared at her in the soft light an instant. "Even if you don't go to the movies." A sudden seriousness had apparently come to him—possibly brought on by the suggestion of ulterior motive in someone other than himself.

"How would you like it if it was the truth?" she inquired with as much mockery as she could command.

"Better perhaps than you would," he said with veiled insolence.

That roused her, of course—the hint of a threat always did!

"Well," she said, "maybe it is true."

"Maybe," he echoed with an odd tone of disbelief.

It gave her sudden strength—that tone.

"Well, it is the truth," she said abruptly. "I've only been playing a game with you from the beginning. I've just meant to humble you from the start!" She stared at him with what triumph she could command. "And I've done it!"

"Humble me——" he began.

"Yes," she said with vindictiveness. "From the moment you stood in the library reading that book and didn't look up. I decided then I would humble you!" She stared at him coolly. "That is really all it has been since—I haven't cared whether you kissed me or not! You can't have me, you can't get me—you're just one of those conceited men who

think they can do anything! I've just been waiting for this minute, so you would know that you were good and stung!"

She rose abruptly, drawing her furs around her neck.

"You can take me home now, too! Is that plain?"

Was it plain? Was it plain?

Why, it was like a stream of fire, of blinding oil, to the man who sat motionless at the table. Incredible, stunning, unbelievable! The change in the girl before him was like that in some viper, turning suddenly from a lazy sunbath to strike venomously, angrily, at some sudden offending foot! Spots of high colour in her cheeks, too, almost contempt in her golden-gray eyes—her whole figure instinct with the truth of her words!

"Why, I can't—quite believe it," he said.

"Your kind never can," she retorted.

But if it was true, why, it was beyond all good breeding, he thought as he rose from the table—it was outside all social graces or ordinary courtesy. It was—it was insulting! When she had started the whole thing herself!

His lips set into one straight, unyielding line, as he helped her into his runabout outside the Georgian a few minutes later. "I'll take you down," he said. By God, he would find out if it were true! Women could not play their tricks on him!

"Only this is not the way to Kerrigan Street," she said coldly as they turned toward the lake boulevard.

"It's my way," he returned icily.

"I'll walk then," she retorted.

"You'll drive."

"As you say," she shrugged her shoulders.

She glanced at him sideways, once or twice, but he

seemed to have set into some mould of iron, his lips stern, set, his eyes fixed straight ahead.

"Where are we going?" she inquired.

"We're going in here," he said shortly, as they drew up before a gray-shingled country house, with a hint of Italian line about it, as it nestled in cedars and gray rocks. Set in a small park of its own, it was—with just beyond the trees the high gabled roof of another country house visible in the grayness.

"I'm not," she stated. She shrank from that.

"You are," he said. He got out and put his feet on the step, too. "If I have to drag you out," he added.

She shrugged her shoulders again.

"There's no need of that," she replied.

The hall was a little room, she saw at once—a sort of extension of the broad hallway, with a grand piano, and plain oiled wood walls, and a great fireplace where a fire burned comfortably. Forrester was ringing a bell that sounded somewhere down in the servants' wing.

"Tell the office I will be in to-morrow," he said abruptly to the pale-faced man who responded. And then he turned to her.

"Perhaps you have misunderstood me a little," he said with a curious hoarseness in his voice.

"Oh, I think not," she replied.

"This isn't any vulgar affair with me," he said steadily. "You are the first real passion of my life. I haven't been any saint, of course—men aren't that. But you are the first woman I ever loved. I've known that for two weeks now."

In the silence, Nancy could almost hear her heart beat.

"Women haven't been my sphere, except incidentally," he went on. "The only woman who ever had any hold on me was my mother. She died nine

years ago—the day before I got the New England contract in Boston. I had a brother. He knew nothing but women—nothing but women."

His voice seemed to die away.

"I want you. I want to marry you. I thought you wanted me. I can stand losing, I suppose. I meant to force you to take back your words out here—when I started. Because I knew you felt passion for me. You have kissed me. I don't want that now. After all, you are only a girl. I suppose you didn't know what you were doing."

Silence fell in the room—a silence that seemed to lend his tall figure dignity; a silence that seemed to hold an accusing dagger at Nancy's heart. Yes, she had known what she was doing—she had. And after all, he was sincere. There was no reason why he should not have the truth.

"I'm sorry, Forr," she said, with an odd little gesture of her hand. She held it out an instant. But he did not seem to see it. So she walked to the divan, stood a minute, and then sank down upon it, turning her ring nervously.

"I did mean to humble you at the start," she said softly. "Until—you kissed me in the peacock dress—I didn't want to after that. Because I—I liked your embrace. I was mad about it, really—I couldn't humble you, I wanted you, just as you wanted me."

She held up her hands appealingly, to keep him back.

"Please," she begged. "But I am—I am married."

"Oh," he said. He was staring at her with deep, haunting eyes.

"I knew I ought not to want it—I couldn't have it—I didn't know I could ever feel like that, after being married. And the dressing room was worse!

And last night—last night frightened me. I thought I could hurt you in the Georgian, insult you so you wouldn't come to see me again—so I wouldn't have to try to keep from kissing you, from seeing you——"

"Oh," he said again. "Youth——"

"Perhaps," she cried. "But I had to do something—I couldn't keep on kissing you—seeing you!"

"Why not?" he asked.

"Why not!" she repeated in amazement.

"Why, we're not children," he said passionately. "Why shouldn't we see each other, have each other, just because of some rule of a blind society! Who cares for any such rule, except to beat it? Life is for us—its rules for us—not to keep us from things. We control society—not it, us!"

"But I don't know——" she began.

"I do," he said masterfully. "Love doesn't stop with marriage. It goes on. Life goes on. It shouldn't be spoiled because of blind adherence to some pretty academic idea that isn't true. Love comes more than once. What are our brains for except to satisfy convention, society——"

"But I don't mean that," she cried. "I mean I don't know—I'm not sure—of myself, what I feel, what it is, how much it is—if it is love—if I ever can love——"

"You!" he exclaimed. "You! Nan! Not love!" He took her into his arms with a force of passion that seemed to blind her, driving all colour from her face. "Why, you are made for love!" And he kissed her until her arms relaxed and she kissed him, kissed him, kissed him. . . .

Ten minutes later she asked him to take her home—to start to take her, anyway, so that she could feel the cool air, could see the crowds of homeward bound people hurrying along the sidewalks before the brightly lighted stores, could strive des-

perately to regain some sense of reality, of her old personality.

"I'm going to take the street car from here," she told him at the Square.

"But why, my dear?" he asked in surprise.

"Can't you see without my telling you?" she cried softly.

"You mean because of David?" he asked.

"Of course," she answered bitterly. "I retain some shreds of decency."

Her whole world of ideas, indeed, seemed to have filled suddenly with great, monstrous shapes. Was there any such thing as love? Or was it a name for a thousand shades of emotion, a fire that blazed high or flickered low with the passing of every personality within its light? Had she ever loved David? Or did she still love him, despite the gust of passion which Forrester had let loose in her? Or did she love Forrester, and was he right: that love came many times, and not once?

She shivered at that, even in the warm street car. That was just another view of the endless jars of passionate wine! That was the thing that made life intolerable, that took away all the ground of reality from beneath one's feet, that made of life only a shifting veil of desire where no one's figure could be discerned, where all refuge or haven was denied.

Where no one could be found to-morrow where you had left him to-day!

Could that be the truth?

She sat opposite David at dinner an hour later with a sense of unreality that amounted almost to irrationality possessing her. Was it really possible that she herself, Nancy Van Wyck, was playing such an incredible rôle? The moment with Forrester before the fire in the Italianesque villa, all the mo-

ments she had had with him since the first one in the library on Morpeth Terrace—they all seemed more like incidents remembered from some story or play than a faithful record of her own, her very own actions!

What would David say if he knew what a deceitful creature she was? That was the only name one could apply to such an affair, when one looked on it as the affair of someone else. And yet it was different! Immortally, endlessly different when she herself was involved. Did everyone think that as they followed out some similar course?

She dragged herself through the long silence of the dinner, a kind of desperation in her over the strength of her emotions. Why, despite all her struggles and resolutions and hours of weariness, the meeting with Forrester had ended just as they always did—in abandonment and passion. The impossibility of really doing something about it was never clearer than sitting here under the candlelight. Perhaps that was why people wrote letters! They did not have the courage to face the thing. And yet she did not want to write any letters. She would rather go some place and not come back, go somewhere with David and escape it all.

She stared at him after dinner where he smoked slowly before the wood fire, a tiny hope springing up in her breast.

"Do you ever miss Fitzhugh Street, and the Lotos Club, Dave?" she asked. Yes, she could break away from the fascination of Forrester, the desire to be with him that gnawed at her heart, if there were something forced, sudden, irretrievable about it.

"Why, yes, I miss them sometimes," he said. "Why?"

"Very much?" she inquired.

"Why, I miss the things we used to do, I think," he said. "You know what I mean—childhood, youth, the gay crowds of girls and boys."

"I see," she said a little disappointedly.

He leaned forward to poke the fire.

"I was up at the Lotos Club to-day. It gave me an odd impression. Jack Walton and his musical airs, and Fred Thomas and Tom Watson drunk as lords, trying to play poker and telling the steward if their wives called they weren't in. An impression of a purposeless existence, somehow—an existence that I've grown away from, anyway. I think I miss the—the little parties, and the Sunday drives, and walking to St. Luke's down Fitzhugh Street Sunday morning. The way things used to be. That's it, mostly."

"That's what you really miss," she assented.

"Why?" he asked.

"Why, because I was wondering this afternoon if perhaps we weren't being foolish, spending our lives down here," she ventured.

She only meant the remark to be a suggestion, a tentative feeler. But it was the first time that it ever occurred to David that her view of Kerrigan Street might not be his. And it roused his emotions oddly. Foolish, to live on Kerrigan Street! Why, what ever could have led her to make a remark like that? She had a curious existence, of course, keeping house in this little apartment, going out to market in her whimsical way, attending luncheons and teas and sewing parties afternoons on Congress Avenue. There was nothing very solid or satisfying about it—it lacked aim and purpose. But then all the girls seemed to lead lives of that sort, more or less. They were not like men. And he had encouraged her to keep up all her ties with Congress Avenue, her amateur plays and her little parties with Preck and Stone and Kitty. . . . Did she miss Morpeth Terrace

and her old life, and the theatre and the riding club and the Thursday Musicale more than she had said? Or was there something deeper than that—some way in which he had been neglecting her?

"Aren't you happy here, Nan?" he asked.

"Why, I think so," she said in a tiny voice.

"Meaning not very?" he suggested.

"Not—not very, perhaps," she admitted.

"Tell me why," he asked her. He had gone over to her on the divan and taken her hand.

"I don't know," she said. There was a curious sound in her voice like that of a child who wants to cry and cannot.

"But you must have some reason," he urged.

"Just a feeling," she said.

Well—well, it was like her, of course—just to have a feeling! She was like a child in many ways, despite her sophistication in some. But a feeling had its basis in something, nevertheless. There was a reason of some sort always for her emotions.

"What is it you want?" he asked patiently.

"I want to go away, I think," she said suddenly. "Couldn't we go away for a year or two,—couldn't we travel, or—or do something else, something that wouldn't keep us here? Couldn't you do that, Davie?"

"Why, it would be fun, of course," he said slowly.

"Well, why not!" she exclaimed.

"We could get a little vacation," he began.

"No—for a year or two years," she cried.

"But we can't please ourselves like that, Nan," he said.

"We've got enough money," she cried rebelliously.

"I don't mean that," he answered uncomfortably. "The Brotherhood House——"

"But why not think of me a little?" she cried accusingly.

It was just a desperate little cry, forced from her by the plain fact of impending defeat. But it had an odd effect upon David.

"Yes, I might do that, I suppose," he said with an odd sound in his voice.

Repentance flooded her heart instantly.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Davie," she cried. She put her arms around him in a gust of regret. "Really, I didn't mean that!"

But he shook her off, and rose, seeking his pipe and filling it with meticulous care, as if he did not trust himself to speak until emotion had subsided.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't mean it," he said then.

She sat on the divan, staring at him, her eyes rather wide.

"But I didn't," she protested.

"It's true, though," he said. "Kerrigan Street is my life—not yours. I suppose I've been too much wrapped up in what I've been doing to think of you. I thought you were happy, too."

"I ought to be," she cried at once.

"But you aren't," he said laconically.

"But I am," she exclaimed passionately. "I just felt blue to-day!" Something in her, indeed, that forbade taking any such advantage of him as this. A kind of passion in him to do what was right! What was right by her, by his friends, and his country—even by Kerrigan Street. There was almost a kind of pathos in that desire.

"Please forget it, Dave," she begged him a little blindly.

"But I can't do that, Nan," he told her.

"But you could take me to the Lyric to see 'Kismet,' couldn't you?" she begged again. She leaned over him then, whispering the words first in

one ear and then in the other until he could no longer stand the sensation and had to smile.

"Do come on, Davie," she said.

"All right," he agreed, at length. "'Kismet' it is!"

"And don't think of it again," she finished.

CHAPTER XI

In Which the Aristocrat of Achievement Remembers His Obligations but Is Forced as Usual to a Compromise

Like lighting a lantern for David, nevertheless, that cry of Nancy's was, before the fire on Kerrigan Street, making him stop short an instant to stare at the encompassing shadows. Without it, possibly, it would never have occurred to him that her view of Kerrigan Street could be any different from his, that any question of his duty to her was involved. And yet that fact stood out clear and unmistakable, once he held the lantern high and stared —clear and unmistakable and wearing the same aspect that it has worn to the makers of achievement since marriage began.

No part for her in this enterprise. How much should she be asked to sacrifice? She was following out no desire of her own, achieving no height of her own heart's desire, in the meals she was cooking in the tiny kitchen, in the hours she was spending cleaning the apartment, in the days she was going marketing. She was simply contributing to his achievement!

Just what was he achieving that she should be asked to sacrifice for it?

In the bare study of the Brotherhood House, with its view of tenement windows and muddy, slippery cobbles just touched here and there with the late snowflakes of April, he asked himself that question,

aware of a sudden of the intangibility of this goal for which he strove, aware of the intangibility of all work that concerned itself with ideas and not dollars.

Yes, it was intangible, he admitted. And yet it was a perfectly plain thing he was striving for down here, a perfectly plain battle he was fighting. There was no conception of a stable and enduring America on Kerrigan Street, such as he and Preck and his friends held from the Fitzhugh Street of their youth, with its lawns and houses and red-brick public school, its snowball fights and family servants and Sunday schools, its inherited wealth and tradition, its St. Peters and St. Lukes and dim impression of New England ancestors.

There was no view possible for Kerrigan Street except that distorted and grimy one that industry gave. Behind Kerrigan Street was a vastly different set of facts from those behind New England or Virginia, behind Franklin and Washington and Emerson, back of Lincoln or Lee. Behind Kerrigan Street was all the sweep of hovels and mines in Galicia, of village inns and carved cathedral doors in Poland, of wayside shrines and all mighty priests in Hungary—the textile mills of Moscow and Warsaw, the whitewashed villages of the Carpathians, the folk songs and festivals of the sacred villages, the witches' dance at night upon the hills overlooking Cracow. And overshadowing all, burnt into its very soul, the memory of the thousand years of struggle for liberty against church and state and society, against the mailed fist of privilege that knew neither politics nor frontiers nor creeds. That was what was behind these people of Kerrigan Street.

The best of them were like Jan Kubik, the shoemaker, who had come into the study last night with those hollow eyes and that cough that had cried

aloud the nature of his disease before he had opened his mouth to speak. No boys on Fitzhugh Street with a record like Jan's—leaving that tiny Galician village at sixteen to escape the priesthood; rising at six every morning in that back room under the roof on Allen Street now; working ten hours at his trade, and educating himself at night.

Why, he had slaved to buy the books and educate himself these last three years, going to night school, mastering German and English besides his Polish and Ruthenian, beginning even on Hebrew and Greek and Latin! Jan had the spirit of the enterprise!

He was of the stuff of which the best of them were made.

Maria Cholm was of the other kind, of course. He had known that almost the instant she had risen in the bare, ill-lighted hall after his talk on the Brotherhood House, and the light had fallen on her hard eyes and the faded shawl drawn so tightly about her neck.

"Grateful forever we should be, like dogs—because a pair of shoes they hand to us——"

That was all he could remember now of her arraignment of the Brotherhood House—bitter with the bitterness that goes with all charity. She had given him her reasons, too, afterward. The strike breakers Miss Haynes had sent unwittingly to take her job after she had watched her mother and father grow haggard and old under the welsbach, night after night! After she and the rest had struck against the greasy contractor who had doled out the cloaks, and pointed stonily at the window and then at the door when they had cried that they could not live on the twelve cents, piecework. . . .

"If you don't want to go from the door, you can go from the window! I got to make my own living!"

That was what Einstein had said to them.

And she had almost screamed it at David in the bare hall as she had told him about it after the meeting. Why, the union was her country, she had said then; her salvation, her religion. The Union! That gave her her bread and her wages.

A philosophy born of bitter need, that philosophy of communism and union labour that burnt Kerrigan Street to its soul—born of sweatshops and hopelessness, of hunger and the brotherhood of despair in these canyons of bricks and stone where life's opportunity seemed to have faded into a chance at a job, and the only bulwarks against starvation were those that the union could erect and defend.

An endless stream of greenhorns came into these streets and small shops, always ready to work for a pittance because they didn't know they could not live on it when slack seasons came and the shops closed down one after another.

Not an industry, but a shambles! That was what this business was—with its seasonal unemployment and its failures, its mushroom enterprises, its eternal seesaw struggle between desperate workers and keen, scheming employers, its factories and protocols, its furtive sweatshops, its Uriah-like contractors and wretched foreign greenhorns.

It was no wonder that a new kind of vision shone throughout all Pollock's bar when the tall Galician with the coal-black Van Dyke beard painted that new brotherhood of the future for them. The brotherhood of industry it was that Anton Fechter painted—a new flowering of that dream which had lain in men's hearts from the days of Adam; pushing up its tendrils here and there throughout the centuries; blooming dimly in St. Augustine's City of God; bursting the bonds of feudalism, once chivalry had departed; straining on and upward through the rise of kingdoms and empires to break

forth in the French Revolution; crossing the seas then to the English Colonies; returning, spreading on and out, higher and higher, into Italy and Germany in 1848; to flower finally as the brotherhood of democracy of to-day. Was it to be subtly shackled and trampled under foot now by the rank growth of factories and of industry—a new feudalism—a new upas tree in the garden of humanity, poisoning again the dream of the brotherhood of man?

The Amalgamated was Fechter's answer to that question. Democracy in religion had come; democracy in politics; why not democracy in industry? The Amalgamated, with no limit upon its membership so long as they were in the clothing industry, no object except the joining of all the unions in the complicated and wide-scattered business—no aim except the steady advance of the workers to their goal of a livelihood and freedom! Only incidentals, the question of temporary wages, the iron stand for the worker's right to his job, the protocols, and the question of collective bargaining—and leading in the end to the coöperative clothing factory of the future, where the worker shared the management, and labour hired capital, and the seasons of unemployment were ended and the democracy of industry was achieved.

The Amalgamated would achieve all that!

Could any one blame Kerrigan Street for giving it a chance?

And yet Congress Avenue seemed to, although it had nothing else to offer. The thing was almost as palpable as a brick wall whenever the subject came up at the Lotos Club at a noontime luncheon. The Amalgamated was dangerous—this man Fechter, was he not an anarchist, or a dynamiter, or socialist? They were all the same thing! Even Preck seemed

to lose his sense of humour whenever Anton Fechter's name came up.

An extremely pregnant silence, too, in the meetings of the executive committee of the Brotherhood House whenever the thing was mentioned. No question of pretense on the part of Forrester Stone, of course, as to where he stood. A new cry for the Jew, this Amalgamated business! A weapon by which the power of society could be destroyed—and then gathered up again and used. And then no more brotherhood! But the iron rule of Labour! That was Stone's view of the thing.

The Brotherhood House had better shut out such incendiaries!

Almost equally strong minded was Doctor Musson, with his background of the Episcopal Church, and the past of St. Peter's, with its founding by that first Edmunds to reach Clewesbury, and its consequent growth as her farms became city lots and the city grew out of its youth, and St. Peter's remembered its obligations and started little Miss Haynes down here in a settlement house. Still a religious charity to Doctor Musson, this great Brotherhood House on Kerrigan Street, alleviating the sufferings of those who had not succeeded—a great dispenser of open-hearted charity.

He did not seem to realize in the least that the idea for which Miss Haynes had once stood had already faded into the past, lost sight of in this new rising tide of conflict. Nearly eighty per cent. of Clewesbury was foreign now. And poverty was one of the accompaniments of industry and cheap labour. It was no longer merely the sign of an unfortunate person. It was more the badge of the unskilled workman.

Those thousand foreigners in Fechter's bare, ill-lighted hall, for instance, were but the vanguard of

Clewesbury's hundreds of thousands, staring across Pollock's bar and the railroad bridge with angry, sullen eyes. The six thousand children in these streets just about the white pillars of Ezekiel Clewes' old mansion were only symbolic of the other thousands growing up without the slightest conception of American ideals or ethics! No chance of thrusting Anglo-Saxon civilization down any of their throats so long as industrial conditions even faintly paralleled those from which they had come in distant Europe—so long as their fathers and mothers gazed at America with suspicion and unbelief, as did Maria Cholm.

That was what this Brotherhood House was for now—a Brotherhood House which stood out against the reactionary, against the self-seeker and the profiteer—a Brotherhood House which stood for the ideals of the real, democratic America. It was not an outworn relic of St. Peter's charity!

But a symbol of America's good faith and honesty, and American democracy—an attempt to bridge the dangerous chasm that yawned wider every day between Congress Avenue and Kerrigan Street.

That, indeed, was the plain, definite thing he was trying to do. How much was it worth to Nancy?

The question haunted him quite vividly in the first few days that followed as he spoke noons to the workers at Mandelbaum's and Lewisohn's factories, as he came up the stairs nights from the study after trying to convince some group from Allen Street or the Ghetto, as he wrote the short series on industry which the house organs of the bigger manufacturers asked for. Happiness in the end, he knew, was not a matter of surroundings, but of self. And yet that was nothing to give to Nancy as a solution for her unhappiness. Not while he led an existence filled to the brim with interest while

she spent her youth waiting for him to come home. What should he do about it?

Like all the rest of that fine company that he saw was Nancy then—indeed—only finer, and calling for more understanding and tenderness because of the pathos of her odd little existence. There were never any base figures in David's Odyssey. He never saw Forrester Stone as anything except an earnest diplomat, striving in his way for America's industrial future! Or Preck Addams in any rôle other than that of trying to write the great American novel! Mistaken figures in that great company—ah, yes! Mistaken, like Van Wyck, in the twilight of life and still seeing materialism as success. Mistaken, like Fechter, striving for a brotherhood of man, and viewing with suspicion the only approach to it yet builded on earth: America. Mistaken, but not base.

There were never any knaves in that view of his from Olympus.

And yet Nancy, I am afraid, had quite ceased to be what he thought her by that time. She was watching the spring come with nameless fear, as if the poor, weak imitation that the trees of the street gave of the woods of April were an indication of her own strength. Why, marriage was only a name for the fence which people had built around the shifting sands of emotion! That was what she was thinking. People gazed on those sands with fearful eyes, too, buying themselves conventional, blurred glasses, as if they were children who feared to see too clearly lest they find no solid, enduring ground. But marriage was not the end of anything. It was the beginning of problems.

Problems which you had to solve by yourself! She might be all wrong, for instance, in this policy of "so far, no farther" which she had adopted with

Forrester to keep herself from utter madness. But she could not think of anything else—nothing that seemed within her strength, anyway. She could ask no one else. And David was no help. He even seemed to urge her into meeting Forrester, into making opportunities to see him. Well—— She knew why that was. It was because he thought she was unhappy—and he couldn't bear to see her not absolutely contented. But how intensely he must be absorbed in his ideas and work not to notice what she did, not to notice how little time he gave her! And how implicitly he must trust her!

The realization brought tiny tears in her eyes.

He was so different from her father, who always thought the worst of her! How could she possibly go on when Forrester's attraction for her was growing with almost every meeting, when to be with him now was like sipping once more a wine grown older and more potent—wine deepened and coloured with passion, inviting her to drink madly. . . .

Forrester apparently had no intention of giving her up, either. Even after she had told him all her intolerable doubts about the number of jars. Even after she had told him that there would never be any one like David! He had only answered that by saying that she was a maddening creature of a thousand moods, and had smiled at her with that peculiarly compelling look.

And yet even he agreed that it could not go on forever—that David would find out sooner or later. Why did she not tell him now and have it over with?

That was Forrester's solution. But it would never be hers! Never.

That was the only thing she was really sure of as the maples came into leaf and the flies buzzed against the Moeller Beer Psyche in Moynihan's window and spring blended into warm summer once more. She

would find strength somehow to keep this thing from ending in disaster—no matter what else she did. She would not give way to her emotions . . . .

It was why she took on such a will-o'-the-wisp aspect to Forrester Stone, perhaps, in those afternoons when she met him at the Georgian and later at the Country Club. A maddening creature of gossamer waywardness! A doubly irritating one, too, because despite her evident passion, she would not admit that he had completely won her! She was really prolonging the present situation only because she could not bear to hurt David, because she apparently thought that he could not live without her! And the chances were that the doctor had had a dozen different affairs in the last three years—if men were anything alike! But she could not play him like that forever! She could not play either of them like that. There would come a showdown. . . .

That conclusion was deepening steadily into a conviction, for Stone, as the heat of midsummer burnt the lawns of Congress Avenue a deep brown, and the street cars at night were jammed with straw-hatted perspiring crowds bound lakeward, and on Kerrigan Street the babies cried until breathless dawn stole across the crowded fire escapes and a moment of cool morning touched them before the day broke once more. Yes, there would come a showdown—and once United Clothing was a reality, he and Nancy need not care what Clewesbury thought.

How long would it be before United *was* launched?

He speculated on that in the library of the Morpeth Terrace house as he watched Isaac Lewisohn and young Harry making their last stand, late in August.

"But it ain't a sure enough business, I tell you gentlemen," old Lewisohn was saying. "I been in it since I knew anything. It's got a hard history,

Van Wyck. They ain't three of us now out of all them I knew on Jay Street." His voice grew more decided. "Why, I gotta watch that business now like a dog. I ain't going on private cars and yachts like you and Edmunds and Heinrichs and them fellas!"

But Van Wyck broke in harshly:

"Well, if it's risky, all the better. It won't be so hard to control. We'll kill them off so much easier."

But the old man in the high chair screwed up his lips. He looked oddly in keeping with the rows and rows of pottery shapes of all colours and kinds glowing behind him in the lamplight.

"A pair of shears and some cloth, Van Wyck," he said, "and any kike can go in the business."

Van Wyck's impatience with all slowness mastered him abruptly.

"But that don't mean anything," he said. He turned to the pile of letters on the library table. "Here's what Kronig of Chicago says. He's taking stock. He don't want money." He stood up suddenly. "Though we'll give you money for every cent you've got in your Jay Street plant, if you want it! Stock will be worth its weight in gold. That's all. Kronig is going to make real money under his arrangement. His common stock is just thrown in, the preferred his guarantee! Two shares of common for every share of preferred!" He walked up and down the library, with slow, thoughtful steps.

"But I think I want the money," Lewisohn repeated. He stared out the French windows into the darkness. "I don't like stocks, Van Wyck—don't like 'em."

"Because we paid cash for the Mandelbaum business?" Stone inquired.

Lewisohn looked at him.

"Well," he said doggedly, "why can't you pay me cash, too—so you can do what you like?"

"Because I'm worth only ten million instead of two hundred, Lewisohn," Van Wyck retorted. "I can't buy up every business in the trade." He struck the heavy table a blow with his fist that made the lamp tremble. "Or I would, by God! I'm putting in as much cash as any one, except Kronig. Isn't Kronig's judgment good?"

The name of Chicago's textile baron put an odd look in Lewisohn's eyes.

"Jake's no fool," he admitted. "But how do I know he ain't getting money—or some money?" His voice rose higher. "I slaved for that business, Van Wyck—slaved for it. I ain't taking chances at my age, with Rebecca and the two girls on my back—to say nothing of Harry here!" He grinned at his son where the younger man sat by the lamp, smoking a cigarette nervously. Harry Lewisohn bore the whole burden of the business these days. "You can afford it, Van Wyck. There ain't no limit for you." There was a tone of respect in his voice, as he acknowledged the resources of the man opposite him. "But I can't."

Van Wyck sat down again.

"Let's talk business then," he said quietly. He laid his cigar on the table. "I can't buy up every business we need in order to effect the combine, or I would—and cut the thing myself."

Lewisohn nodded, while young Harry grinned.

"United will guarantee you fixed income on the preferred. I'm here to tell you that the common stock is going to the sky in five years. And meanwhile you've got your own business to run just as before, so you're taking no risk. That's one proposition."

He stood up abruptly, taking up his cigar again.

"The other proposition is that we'll fight you with the combine—and break you." He took a book from the table, of a sudden, and tore it in two. "Break you like that and throw you aside!" He tossed the ragged paper and cloth into the brass wood box by the fireplace. "We don't have to have you"— his voice changed again, as he relighted his cigar—"but we'd rather have you in than out! That's all."

He took a turn or two up and down behind the big centre table while Lewisohn eyed his son cautiously, his eyes turning once in a while to the torn book in the brass box. It had gilt edges, that paper, the old man noticed. And Jake Kronig and Van Wyck here and Jonathan Edmunds would be able to do that to him, too, just as easy—with Mandelbaum, and fair control in Baltimore and Rochester, and maybe New York! That was a risk; just as much as United was a risk, in such a business, with the Amalgamated always on your heels. Stone could get the Amalgamated after him, if he was willing to play dirty, too. And these fellas like Stone didn't care.

And he would still have his own factory to run!

For a moment, nevertheless, he hesitated—until the reverse of that offer of Van Wyck's began to float grimly across his mind again.

"I'm with you, I guess," he said then. "Hey, Harry?"

The younger man stood up and flipped his cigarette into the fireplace.

"Why, certainly," he said contemptuously. "We'll take common stock, too. I guess we'll get by."

"Of course, we'll get by," Van Wyck returned. "You can bet your last dollar on that."

He did not know that outside, as the Lewisohns got into the motor—just the two men alone now,

the old man was still voicing his unforgettable thought.

"But I could wish we got some money, too, Harry," he said to his son. "I don't like stocks, Harry——" He stared out at the streets where he had once peddled suspenders, before there was any Harry Lewisohn or Rebecca. "I don't like 'em!" he repeated.

But his son merely grunted.

"It'll be all right," he said shortly.

"Well, might'll be," the old man agreed, lapsing into his early speech. "Might'll be, Harry."

United would be on the market by December first, Van Wyck was telling Stone in the library at the same moment.

Nancy received the news in curious silence.

"Meaning that you won't be in Clewesbury after Christmas?" she inquired.

"Exactly," Forrester returned significantly.

"Oh," she said.

Well, then, she told herself, Christmas would save her. She would only have to keep on resisting until then—and Fate would decide for her. It was a good thing that it would be no further off than Christmas, too. Forrester seemed to be almost gloomy these last few times she had seen him, despite all efforts to make him see that for her the thing was not one of choices but of differences.

They were two such absolutely different men! And she liked them in such different ways—or the ways seemed different, somehow, although she could not say how. How could she change that? And how could she ever change her relationship to David when what had been—had been. . . . She could never bear to leave him. Some curious tenderness warned her against that even in her worst moments.

Just the slightest glimpse of David left alone in the Brotherhood House, with those unseeing eyes of his, and that old coat—just a fleeting glimpse of him gave her vivid warning of how swiftly gaiety and emotion would vanish if she ever really hurt him. The picture brought a lump in her throat always!

Why, in God's name, had she been made with this desire for Forrester?

Other people were beginning to notice it even if David didn't. She felt sure of that. She had sensed a curious atmosphere in the last few meetings of the sewing circle that she had attended and in the gatherings of the Babies' Aid Society—a finely wrought mixture of sympathy and cattiness that was unmistakable.

Was it the idea that she ought to be commiserated with over living on Kerrigan Street, she asked Kitty a week later, "Or has the bond business gone to Marian's head?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, I suppose it's their way of ascertaining the truth about you and David," Kitty said inscrutably. "Or you and Forrester, if you like that better."

Kitty's eyes had an oddly searching glance in them.

"They think David is unsuccessful, you know, because he hasn't—well, because you can't entertain, and you—you know Kenny has made more than a hundred thousand just this year, and they are going to build out by the club. . . ." She left the rest unfinished.

"And Forrester has lots of money?" queried Nancy.

"Well, seeing you were always used to so much on Morpeth Terrace," Kitty admitted cautiously.

"What a lot of pigs!" Nancy cried. . . .

Why, how incredibly little they understood David if they thought that he was unsuccessful because he didn't make money! As if money could ever be

his criterion of achievement! Didn't they realize what he was trying to do?

They must be obsessed themselves with money if they ascribed that as a motive for her intimacy with Forrester, too. That was the thing to be on Congress Avenue, apparently—well balanced, and calculating, and cold, and moral! Then you were all right, even if you were a liar. To have any emotion you shouldn't have—that was the worst thing that could happen! Kitty would always be all right, for instance, despite her cold, calculating, selfish ambition. She had never been criticized, even in the days of the dances. And yet she had cut her engagement with Charlie Morris that year when the young Winthrop boy had come to Clewesbury for the holidays from Boston—and then had taken up Charlie again when she had failed to secure the Winthrop heir. The motive was plainer now to her, with the haze of youth faded from it. But it had always been considered all right by Congress Avenue, so far as one could judge. And the motive of marrying for money must have been clear to the older people all the time.

She herself should have been made that way, instead of liable to throw herself away for an instant's madness. . . .

She stared curiously at the gray bulk of St. Peter's as she drove down Congress Avenue in the warm September sunset glow. How odd it was that the few meaningless words Doctor Musson had said in there had had power to change her whole existence! There must be something back of things somewhere that she did not understand to make a ceremony like that so indestructible. Old Martha, down on Baden Street, she remembered, had never stirred until she had seen the priest of the wooden cathedral on the corner. She had been always going to Mass

and to confession and to see the priest. Lots of older people, too, seemed to feel that way about churches whether they went to St Patrick's or to St. Peter's. They seemed to find strength and a solution of some kind beneath their spires, just as people must have in other days and lands.

Wasn't it odd that religion had never been mentioned in the Morpeth Terrace house, except when Aunt Minnie had had one of her streaks of annoying her brother? Religion seemed to be almost entirely left out of the younger sets on Congress Avenue, too. Did they always feel entirely self-sufficient? Didn't they ever have moments when they wanted some great kindly father to come along and put his arm about their shoulder—some moments when they felt all alone the way she did?

She spent the next few days pondering that.

"Let's go to church this Sunday," she suggested to David then.

"Where?" he inquired.

"St. Peter's," she responded at once.

"Musson?" his voice sounded a little doubtful.

"Yes."

"Why, yes," he agreed, "we might try him."

She listened to the sermon Sunday morning, her eyes wandering over the well-dressed congregation, curious emotion in her. One ought to find some help here, certainly, if anywhere. The church must have spent long hours trying to straighten out life for those people it had married unhappily. It must know all about such feelings as she had, from experience with much worse cases than hers. Otherwise Doctor Musson would not have made her promise all those things about which she had been so ignorant.

"Keepers of our inheritance. . . ."

The sermon arrested her a little at that. Did he

mean her inheritance? He couldn't mean her inheritance. Her inheritance was her enemy—an unseen enemy that was always creeping out of its dark room to take her by the throat. No, he meant America's inheritance, she discovered a few minutes later. The Pilgrims, the Puritans—those things David sometimes talked about. Stevenson's poem to his nurse—another inheritance.

Her mind wandered after that. What a vivid blue that was in the great velvet curtain across the huge windows beyond the altar! What a curious mixture religion was, too! How straight old Jonathan Edmunds sat in his carved pew! How eminently respectable the whole atmosphere was—and how fearful it would be if she should rise suddenly and cry out what was the matter with her?

That would shock all respectability out of St. Peter's, outrage the tradition you almost felt as you sat in the church.

A wave of bitter disappointment swept over her as they walked slowly out of the church at the end of the service. No, Doctor Musson apparently thought people had no personal troubles. He didn't seem to want to talk to you much about yourself and what was happening to you to-night and to-morrow. Perhaps you were expected to find that out for yourself, while he told you of the big things that were going on in the world.

She pondered that in silence as she and David drove home through the quiet, pleasant streets, and David stopped downtown for some cigars and the Sunday papers.

Perhaps that was it. You strangled yourself—and tried for faith, and read the Bible.

Perhaps that would help her to last until Christmas. . . .

CHAPTER XII

In Which We Get Two Views of a Strike While Nancy Finds Still a Third

She tried that then, denying herself even to Kitty while she read the New Testament through at least five times in the autumn afternoons, trying to discover for herself what the secret was. The Old Testament she early discarded, as being so long and beginning so far back that she would never reach Kerrigan Street and the Clewesbury of to-day until all necessity was past. What a heart-rending thing it was, though, this New Testament! How differently the whole story appeared to her, too, compared to the way it had looked in those chaotic days of Sunday School in the Dutch Reformed on Baden Street, when she had always learned by heart the answers to the questions on the printed syllabus old Mr. Henschel gave out. Poor Mary! And Jesus. Endless tears in those words of His! Oh, to be like that! Why could she not be like that?

She tried it faithfully for a while, going with David to St. Luke's, and then walking to Fitzhugh Street for Sunday dinner afterward, under the same chestnut trees and along the same grass-bordered graystone sidewalks where David had played as a boy. Surely she and Forrester did not have to be so insane! Surely they could be just friends, without any talk of passion or kisses. It was so pleasant and peaceful after the hymns, to sit here in

the old-fashioned house, before the low coal fire in the white marble-framed grate.

Why could she not convince Forrester of that, and they all be just friends together?

She asked Forrester Stone that question, too, while he listened to her in silence, half amused, half irritated. This religious spasm was just an inevitable stage, in his view, of the journey toward self-indulgence! It rendered her even more desirable, with the glimpse it gave of how intolerable it would be to lose her. But it was only a passing phase, of course. She might even be capable, almost unconsciously, of playing upon his emotions by some such thing as this—although Heaven knew that wasn't necessary. She probably considered it necessary to make some concession to conventional conscience. But in the end, passion would overcome her, and she would give herself to him. It was only a question of time, he told her rather cynically. . . .

It was rather tragic, the way his prophecy seemed destined to come true. Her struggle altogether did not last more than a month. A wavering Tuesday, a regretful Wednesday, with tiny glances at the imps of passion on Thursday, and then waves of irresistible desire for all the breathlessness and madness of Forrester's embrace—and faith seemed to have departed. That was the first week. Desire, struggle, and self-denial spelled the second, but with dying courage. And the third she could only stick out until the Friday—and then she gave up. No, it was all just an emotional drama with her, she decided—more scenes for her little theatre. And not nearly so convincing or enthralling as the drama of passion or the light comedy of flirtation. She did not seem to have any convictions—only feelings. No amount of reading the words of Jesus seemed to change those. She seemed to have no will, or no desire to have one.

It was the sole result of her appeal to religion, while David smiled at her latest, passing, whole-souled enthusiasm and thought her heart had been touched by the Wonder Story of the world this time, instead of by the little black kitten across the street.

For all of them, nevertheless, Fate was approaching in Seven League Boots. It was the hour then in Clewesbury of United Clothing. A. J. Van Wyck had put over a really big one at last, Congress Avenue was telling itself at those dinners of the elect.

It would be a good thing to get in on the ground floor this time, before the stock went to the sky as the other ones had! Down Congress Avenue, down all those shaded side streets, and out through the country places of East Clewesbury spread the whisper, creeping finally into the humbler homes of the south side, into obscure offices overlooking Western Avenue, into lumber yards and coal offices along the lakeshore. Buy United Clothing, as soon as the books were open! The Clewesbury National would open the books, and Wall Street had underwritten the thing—and Van Wyck's and Edmunds' names guaranteed the sure future of the returns.

Even Aunt Hat heard of the project finally, and asked David about it on one of those rare visits of his in the late afternoon. "Oh, it will be all right, I suppose," he said. Somehow, there seemed to be only a picture in his mind now, when clothing was mentioned, of women stooping all day long in the lofts of Allen Street, running machines with animal-like intentness, sewing piecework at home nights in the cheerless rooms where he was sometimes called to some exhausted old woman or tragic-eyed child, choking with pneumonia! No sweatshops under the law, of course; but a suspicious reappearance of huge black bags on sleds, on baby carriages, and slung across women's shoulders, once piecework

prices dropped steadily from fifteen cents to fourteen, to twelve—and starvation called for night work to keep body and soul together.

"But it will be all right," he repeated.

"Though you don't seem enthusiastic!" Hat retorted.

"I don't think I am," he answered.

No, the thing was simply a game to Andrew Van Wyck, he couldn't help thinking—a game that he played for the sake of excitement. But it was no game to Anton Fechter, or Maria Cholm, or any of the others of Kerrigan Street. It was life or death to them. For them, great combinations like United Clothing meant only a more exhausting struggle to secure living wages—that is, if United adopted the policy of the other corporations that Forrester Stone had a hand in. There was nothing to be enthusiastic about in that, certainly.

He could almost predict what Anton Fechter would have to say when he heard it!

He would probably ask what it had to do with democracy?

There seemed to be a curious insistence on that magic word, these days, as if a spiritual conviction of some kind were sweeping across the heartstrings of America, leading her to reaffirm her faith in the principles of her founding—as if the affirmation in some way was a challenge to the imperial Germany which was beginning to sweep the seas with the bloody broom of the submarine, as if democracy contained in itself some supreme virtue no matter what forces were dominant! No democracy could have anything to do with "scraps of paper," for instance, with the shooting of an Edith Cavell, with the sinking of the *Lusitania*, with a flaming University of Louvain, with *spurlos versenkt* or the *Schrechlichkeit* of a Ludendorff! Those were the crimes of

autocracy, the ancient foe of Democracy since the dawn of history!

The two comprised all mankind, apparently—with no gradations in between. . . .

They swallowed at one gulp idealism and materialism, unselfishness and greed, brutal self-seeking and charity, liberalism and reaction, Heaven and Hell, God and the Devil, progress and retrogression, faith and agnosticism! They were the flame, the banners, and the war! They were Germany and the Allies.

That seemed to be the passionate conviction of America, disregarding the ironic tone of Anton Fechter when he asked what kind of democracy Andrew Van Wyck stood for.

No, despite all apparent contradictions, just as on the war of secession hung the fate of slavery, just as on the war of the Revolution hung the fate of liberty, so on the issue of this conflict hung the fate of democratic institutions. . . .

Autocratic tyranny was challenging once more!

That was the view America was coming to hold, while Kerrigan Street presented the same picture of intellectual confusion that must obtain in distant Europe! Old Gerlach, bending over his maps and little coloured pins, calling it a war of the dollar; bullet-headed Kasyrk, in the Bohemian Hall, teaching the old folk songs to the gatherings there, calling it a war of independence; Wolfson, branding all the contestants with the same brush of capitalism and greed; Makaroff, breathing the spirit of Poland in the Sokol of an evening, pounding the table, and naming it the liberation of nationality; Kleinert, breathing anathema against the commercial greed and envy of Great Britain.

Only one overshadowing, compelling voice on these streets beyond Pollock's bar, indeed. And that was the voice of Anton Fechter, painting the brother-

hood of the future, and calling on his followers to forget nationality and feuds and unite against the employer before the unions were destroyed forever, and starvation and competition held sway once more in Clewesbury.

Democracy in industry, first!

That was his call. . . .

The first rumblings of that were putting Nancy quite out of David's mind, in fact, in early December, when winter's cold, searching blasts had begun to put icy fingers inside the coats of the loungers around the sidewalk gratings of Moynihan's saloon, playing pranks with the evening editions and paper parcels in which home-coming Clewesbury immersed itself downtown at night, while it waited, shivering, to board the cheerful street cars for far outlying residential suburbs—a dollar down and a dollar a week buys a lot!

He heard it in the discussions around the tables in Moynihan's saloon, nights; in the angry arguments that took place evenings after the music was over in Maennerchor Hall and the Kerrigan Street union discussed conditions; in the little knots and groups of workers who stood by the curbs on Allen Street icy noons, their voices high, their hands in their frayed pockets. Why, the contractors were asking twelve coats a day they should finish—and a dog couldn't keep body and soul together on that! It should all be piecework now, too, on a new scale, and no union rates about it! And even the rates should not be announced until after the work was done. . . . And Ike Rosenberg was claiming he had to shut down because he couldn't pay wages, because he didn't have orders—and then he was opening another loft over by Charlton Street where he just paid the piecework rates, and the union was barred! They were I. W. W.'s, the manufacturers were telling the news-

papers, too. And the truth was that it was slack season, and they were going to kill the union, instead of spending their time getting the industry on a year-round basis—so everybody could live—that was the truth. Why wouldn't the papers print that? Instead of advertisements of United Clothing?

It was the old basic conflict cropping out again, Anton Fechter told David, a week later, in the Brotherhood House study—the employer's desire for autocratic control of his own business opposed to the worker's right to his job and a share of control over the circumstances of his work.

"They're going to try to get us this time, I suppose," he said quietly. "But we will be ready for them, my friend." He stared hard at the cigar he was smoking, before he put his next question. "Will you let our local use your assembly room?"

"Why, certainly," David replied. "It's open to all Kerrigan Street—whoever wants to use it."

"By God," he brought down his fist triumphantly on the table, "By God, I knew it! You are a friend." He turned toward McKim where that huge bulk of a man sat—he always seemed like some ship just in from a heavy sea—"Didn't I tell you, Mac?"

"Perhaps," McKim responded.

"It's the kids and the women I'm sick for," Fechter's eyes filled with shadows. "We've only got benefits enough for nine weeks."

"Not nearly enough," said McKim.

"But what makes you think it's coming?" inquired David.

McKim was scornful. "Why, half the halls in the city are tied up," he said.

"The halls?" David repeated.

"Sure," said McKim. "It has the same look South Dakota had! That's where I had my first experience. Though the companies paid half the

church expenses there—and the ministers wouldn't open their mouths. We haven't got that situation here, anyway."

"And we won't ever get it," said David abruptly.

It was curious, nevertheless, he could not help thinking, after they had gone, and he still sat staring into the fire in the study—it was curious how such duels to the death could go on beneath the apparently quiet, solid society of Clewesbury, and never appear except in a newspaper paragraph here and there, or in a glimpse of a small mass meeting in this hall or that. It must take great provocation to make men strike in such desperate causes. It was hard to get any group of society to make any concerted action of any kind. People were always dropping out, or complaining, or leaving associations in the lurch! Either the provocation must be great, or the faith of these people in their ideal must be endless, to make them so ready to respond to organization.

It was a commentary, in a way, too, on what such things as settlements accomplished. Twenty years this Brotherhood House had stood here! And the union was still Kerrigan Street's only hope.

He rose and went to the window at that, staring out at the cheerless brick tenements across the way, quite dark and deserted at this late hour, except for a dim light here and there high on the upper rows of windows.

Well, they were symbolic in a way—those tenements. They had stood here for twenty years before he came. And they seemed to bid fair to stand there twenty years after he had gone, despite Brotherhood Houses, or churches, or great political parties. Did such changeless poverty mean that humanity could never produce enough to give all its groups life, liberty, and happiness, no matter what its ideals might be? Or did they mean that the defect was inherent

in human nature, and life could never be anything but a struggle—that competition would always rule and coöperation was a dream?

He pondered that question all through the first weeks of December while the unmistakable clouds of industrial conflict gathered, and Nancy wondered what he could find to think about that kept him so silent and absentminded.

By this time she had reached the letter-writing stage in her desperate effort to stave off Forrester; until Christmas could save her. Midnight notes filled with her desperation and desire they were, written each night to give her strength to go one more day each time without seeing him. How hard it was to deny herself when she was alone all day and she only had to step to the telephone to find him!

"It's only really easy, Forrester," she was writing him then, "when I am telling you to be good. When I am alone, I find myself wishing I had no conscience or soul or heart or whatever is the matter with me. You really put up with a lot. No matter what I propose, you do it. I suppose it is because words don't mean anything between us. They seem to be superfluous sometimes, don't they—poor, weak expressions of what really holds us. Kitty called me up and said you were taking her to the theatre—but what she really told me, beneath the words, was that her attractions had triumphed over mine. They haven't really, have they?" That was what she was writing him, at first—letters filled with a desire to tell him the passion and despair that assailed her—later, filled with desperate efforts to persuade him that he should not come and see her again. Wouldn't it be easier if he simply never saw her, never came again? Couldn't they end it that way?

Forrester called her up at that.

"But we've got to end it sometime," she ventured in a choked little voice. "There probably won't ever be a time we can agree on. I've thought it over from a thousand points of view."

"Never," he said.

"I'm serious," she said after a pause.

"You can't end anything over a telephone," he remonstrated.

"It ought to be a good way," she said.

"But you can't mean that, Nan," he said.

"But I think I do," she returned in a little stronger tone.

"I couldn't bear it that way," he said abruptly.

"If it's the only way I can?" she asked.

"Not without seeing you," he said.

"But, Forr——" she began.

And then she realized that they had been cut off. Click, click, click! Yes, only the irritating buzz of the instrument sounded in her ear. A moment she stood in doubt. And then she turned toward the door at the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

It was David, she saw an instant later, shaking the snow from his shoes, and unbuttoning his huge fur coat.

"Oh, hello!" she said uncertainly.

"Hello, Nan," he said in an odd tone. He went across the room and hung his coat across the grandfather rocker. "Going to a tea?"

"Why, no," she said, glancing down at her black taffeta dress.

"I thought you looked a little fancier than usual," he said absently.

"You haven't seen me afternoons lately," she replied softly. There seemed to be almost tiny streaks of gray in his hair when the light caught it in a certain way. "What's up?"

He came forward, blowing on his glasses and polishing them, and then putting them away as he took up his position before the dull fire.

"Why, they've struck," he said comprehensively.

"Who?" she inquired.

"The clothing workers."

"Did Mr. Fechter order them out?"

"They went," he explained briefly.

Like a streak of lightning, that strike, he told her —coming suddenly out of the lowering clouds; beginning in that little shop of Massoni's with its sixteen workers, spreading down to Rosenberg's and Zalinsky's and Wile's, gathering strength and numbers as it swept down Allen Street, and the gesticulating crowds stood on the cobblestones, and the windows of buildings became crowded, thinned, and emptied and shop after shop, loft after loft, factory after factory disgorged its workers, and the conflict was on—pickets, committees, parades, and all!

"Ai! Atta Boy!"

The sounds of tramping feet, the confused cries of many tongues penetrated the living room's quiet of an instant and Nancy sprang to her feet.

"Perhaps they're coming past here," she exclaimed.

"They are," David announced from the window.

Four abreast they were coming, she could see then; holding up the traffic—one woman and three men in the first four, the woman just a girl, the three men of varying ages, one an old man with dirty, yellow gray beard on his chest and sad eyes; the others just two youths, holding up an improvised sign on which was raggedly written in black, "Living Wages," and on another side, "Remember the Triangle Fire."

Behind them, stretching as far as one could see, the column straggled down the street, carrying banners and transparencies on which the word, "Brotherhood" stood out, determination shining in the eyes

of the marchers as they stared at the silent crowds on the sidewalks.

"It's the Kerrigan Street local," said David.

"But what do they want?" Nancy asked, her hand at her throat. There was something indescribably affecting about this silent column.

"Recognition of the union, mostly," David told her.

"Oh," she said. It seemed like such a strange demand to her!

Some premonition seemed to come to her with the thought, nevertheless.

"Do you suppose this will upset Father's plans?" she asked.

"Perhaps," said David inscrutably.

Something in his tone alarmed her, as the telephone rang, and she went to answer it hurriedly. Perhaps this was why Forrester had not called her again, perhaps this was what had happened to prevent him from coming down. Perhaps her father had called him because of the danger to the floating of United Clothing that any extended strike would present. People were not investing in new companies that started out with labour troubles. She knew that. Only big corporations that had the open shop could succeed, too, she remembered Forrester saying time and again.

Did this mean that United might be postponed—and Christmas cease to be her reprieve? Unless they could settle the strike at once?

Fear of that possibility struck her a little cold as she took off the receiver.

It was Forrester's voice, she recognized at once.

"Hello," she said.

"I can't come down this afternoon—just now, Nan," she heard him over the wire. "This confounded strike—perhaps you know——"

"Yes," she said.

"I can't help it, of course. You understand, don't you?"

"Quite, I think," she said.

"We can talk to-morrow at lunch at the Georgian. I can make that, I am sure."

"Perfectly satisfactory," she said.

She closed off almost mechanically. So it was true. That was what had kept him from coming—and might keep him from going to New York after Christmas.

"It was just Forrester," she told David as she came back to the window.

But she did not see a single figure of the rest of that silent, shuffling parade.

She met Stone at the Georgian promptly the next noon, a tiny doubt in her mind whether he would be able to come at the last minute or would send his regrets by a messenger. No simple strike of just the Kerrigan Street local, this conflict, she had realized as she had read the morning paper for the first time in weeks. It involved all the clothing trade in the city, and might bring in Chicago, and New York. A drive on the unions and fair wages, so Anton Fechter characterized it—brought by the Employers' Association's unfair practices in disregarding the protocol's arbitration laws so that the workers had to strike now or go under for good. Chicago was raising a strike fund of half a million, New York would contribute ten thousand a week to keep the benefits going. Did the public want to see the sweatshop come in again, after all the effort and struggle to get rid of it? That was what piecework meant. This strike was an uprising! There had been no urging by business agents or walking delegates. . . .

"All a damn lie," Forrester told her in the Georgian. "It's their next step toward taking over in-

dustry! They only want wages as part of the campaign to oust capital. They're out for revolution. That's what they contemplate. With capital in the place labour has now!"

"Can they win?"

"Not a chance," said Stone pugnaciously. "We'll give them all the strike they want. We can stand it better than they can. They'll be crawling back for their jobs, one by one, as it hits their pocketbooks and their stomachs."

"I thought of United at once," she said.

"We'll defer that."

"Long?"

The anxiety in her voice escaped him.

"Till the strike is broken. We might as well. We've got to start it right. If the Amalgamated holds us by the throat from the beginning, common stock won't ever touch fifty."

"That's what I thought," she said.

"We'll stand flat against any dealing with any union or organization of any kind. We'll rouse public opinion against them until the cows come home. Their scheme can't ever succeed. What are they? A few hundred thousand foreigners in a few big cities. They don't see all the five thousand small towns from Bangor to Portland where Clewesbury conditions don't obtain. American towns! Individual traditions. The American idea is competition, each man for himself, just as it was with old Zeke Clewes and the other pioneers. That's what our publicity will play for. And if that don't do the business, we'll hire Morton's labour spy concern and make trouble in their own ranks!"

In the restaurant his eyes shone with the light of battle.

"But won't that take a long time?" Nancy asked.

"Probably," he admitted. "But we can't treat

with them. And we've got the advantage of tradition, and control of publicity."

"I see," she said slowly.

And yet all she was seeing, as she sat there, and the orchestra in the Pompeian room to the right began playing, was what it would mean for her. Yes, it might mean life or death for these workers, and success or failure for United Clothing. But it would mean them for her, too. Forrester would be here for months longer, now. Even if David suspected nothing, Fate would not decide for her.

She would have to fight for herself. . . .

That was what it meant for her.

Afterward I think she realized that that had been almost her sole view of the strike which shook Clewesbury to its foundations. It had been almost her one thought in all those entrances and exits of Forrester's from the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Brotherhood House, her one idea during all those afternoons and nights when David was out, and the weeks of bitter winter weather came on, and starvation crept closer and closer to Kerrigan Street, holding its grisly cloak across all the meetings of the strikers, bringing the shadow of death to the babies and childhood of Pollock's bar.

And yet she realized dimly what David was doing and why, even at the time. No one could misunderstand that who heard him speak at the Consumers' League uptown, who saw the crowds of shivering, wan children hanging their heels on the curb before the Brotherhood House, wrapped in old shawls or long, ragged trousers, the drab of the scene lightened only by an occasional streak of emerald green or velvet red where some old coverlet made its final appearance as a coat on some rickety boy or girl.

No intimidation or influence at the Brotherhood

House! Fair play there, for American childhood, no matter what industrial struggle was going on!

Who would give fifty dollars for some other woman's child?

That was David's speech at the Pontiac, she always remembered, his hands trembling a little, and perspiration on his big forehead over the effort of speaking. He, who could never speak without self-consciousness!

Yes, it was very plain what he was trying to do.

But it did not solve her problem in the least.

She thought of little else during all those late weeks of the winter while the fate of Europe trembled in the balance and step by step America approached the gates of war, although the echo sounded but faintly in Clewesbury. She was being saved only by the demands on Forrester's time. Her own peace of mind had vanished completely. How could she ever escape the dilemma in which contradictory emotions had placed her?

She did not know, of course, of those meetings in the pottery-filled library, and the daffodil-filled office in the Van Wyck building where the beautifully engraved stock certificates of United Clothing lay piled in neat rows in the cabinet case, and the arguments rose higher and higher as the weeks lengthened and the strike remained unbroken. Nor did she know of those uncomfortable moments when Jonathan Edmunds and Van Wyck faced Doctor Musson in the rectory study on Congress Avenue and Edmunds went over the activities of the Brotherhood House one by one until he came to the children's fund and silence fell—and he cursed roundly and comprehensively the day A. J. Van Wyck's son-in-law had ever been born. Not for nothing had his father been a stable hostler back on the Erie Canal!

She did not even see any of those meetings night after night in the halls of South Clewesbury, when Anton Fechter held his forces together, and the number of relief tickets mounted steadily from a hundred to a thousand to five thousand, and the committee on benefits ceased doling out money and bought ton after ton of supplies and rationed them out in the strikers' stores.

And yet she felt instinctively the approach of a crisis as outside the Brotherhood House the storm arose, and in it her own drama mounted steadily.

She had married a man, anyhow!

She knew that the day she stood on the little wrought-iron balcony of the Chamber of Commerce building and heard David ask for arbitration while the crowd at luncheon hissed and pounded the tables and he turned a little white and then held high in his arms the Italian child he had brought with him. And the assemblage quieted like a theatre audience when the curtain goes up. No Kenny Watson or Preck Addams was facing the Chamber of Commerce, she noticed, with a catch in her throat—just slow, big-hearted David! How he caught at your feelings once in a while! How could any one ever strike at that heart of his?

That was what she was asking herself in the dusk of the April afternoons as she stared in the mirror and noticed with a start how pale she was becoming —and what circles she had beneath her eyes. An impossible existence to go through, this life of deception and strangled emotions, this constant denial of self, this endless unnaturalness! To be given such feelings was like having Black Magic practised on one without one's knowledge or consent! It could not go on. She could feel herself and Forrester sinking deeper into the dullness and dishonour of an

"understanding" every day. Soon they would have no fineness or character left, unless she did something abrupt, sharp, irrevocable.

She realized that with abrupt poignancy late in April, as they sat out the dances at the Everdell's ball for the Fund for the French Wounded.

"It's beyond bearing, Nan," he told her in the shadow of the broad stairs,

"I know it," she said, staring at her fan sombrely.

"But you can't know it," he said passionately. "You're always engaged in thinking of David, thinking of David—always thinking of David! And it is spring now, not Christmas."

She did not take offence at that.

"He's got to be thought of," she said simply.

"But you don't think of me," Forrester replied—"you don't spare me! I can't stand that forever."

"I know it," she admitted.

"I've been patient—God knows."

"Yes—you have."

"And it hasn't been the easiest thing to do. I don't want to just see you at dances, in people's houses—a kiss in a motor car! I want you——"

"Sh!" she said. Her shoulders even were vivid with the hot blush of the thing! "You mustn't say that, Forr!"

"It's true," he said doggedly.

"Don't think it," she cried in a low tone. "Don't you see what it makes of me——"

"It doesn't make me anything except your lover—and you mine," he said at once.

She closed her eyes and bit at the handle of her fan.

"Don't, Forr!" she commanded.

"That ought to be the title of our relationship," he said. "Just: Don't."

"I wish it could," she agreed bitterly.

He stared at her doubtfully.

"Why do you say that?" he asked.

"Isn't it plain enough?" she cried. "Do you think I like my rôle—enjoy deceiving David——"

"Just David——" he interjected cynically.

"Well—denying—you," she added.

"Do you love me?" he asked abruptly.

"I—I don't know," she said honestly.

"Do you want me—the way—I do?"

She stood up suddenly, pulling closer about her shoulders the black chiffon edged with gold that did duty as wrap.

"You shouldn't ask," she said.

"But I do!" he said at once. "I don't care or know anything except you. What is it to me if Carpenter saw you first—that's all it means. Twenty-one! What did you know about disposing of your whole life—with your nature!"

"I should think that would make you doubtful of me then," she said at once.

"No," he said decisively. "I would not keep you an instant after you felt you wanted to go. I would begin by giving you all your own money. You could choose—at any hour of your life. I would take that chance."

"And how about you?" she asked suddenly. "How about my chance?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Couldn't you hold me?" he asked.

She pondered that, as they drove out of the Everdell's grounds into the cold late night air a little later, and Forrester turned the motor north toward the lake shore road, with a little smile at her.

"Just a few stolen minutes," he told her softly.

No, it wasn't a question of holding people's emotion, she decided. It wasn't a question of society's arrangements, or one's own money, or—or anything like that. It was a personal question—whether you

could hurt one so badly, David or any one else! Anybody you liked well enough to marry. . . .

That was all marriage relations were: personal.

She stared out of the frosted window at the conclusion, noticing the damp snow on the roadway.

"This isn't the lake road," she said.

"No, it's the road to the villa," he said. "We can sit a half hour before the fire there—Jonson has gone to bed; nobody can come in."

"Oh," she said.

What a wonderful thrill just the thought sent across her.

"But I don't think we'd better go, Forr," she said.

"No one can come," he said persuasively.

"I'm not thinking of—them," she answered.

"Don't you want to?" he asked.

"Too much," she said.

"Then we'll go," he said masterfully.

"We won't! We'll turn around!" she cried.

"Why, Nan!"

"Please."

He stopped the motor slowly, in a shadowy place, where the stars shone clear and sparkling above a velvet black woodland.

"This is silly," he said at once. "There isn't the slightest reason why not."

"Except that I want to go home," she cried.

"No matter what I want," he said with a touch of anger.

"Forr!" she said, touching his arm.

"Yourself! And what you want!" he said passionately.

"Just what's best," she said tremblingly.

"For David," he cried again. "But not for me—everyone but me—why, you don't love me—or you would think of me—sometimes—just once." He turned toward her in the motor. "You drive me

mad, Nan——" He took her in his arms fiercely. "I could kill you with the desire of it!" He threw her from him angrily. "But you don't care—you are thinking just of your side of it—David's side of it. Never mine!"

He started the motor abruptly, swiftly.

"I'll take you back—for good. Perhaps that would be best, anyhow!"

"Don't say that," she cried.

"It's time I did say it," he answered harshly.

Unexpected pain shot through her at the statement, too, so that she clenched her hands rather than reply. It was unbearable to quarrel with him. But to reply would be to beg him to go to the villa, she knew! And she must not do that—not even if she lost him.

"I suppose so," she breathed finally.

"Is that all you care?" he asked grimly.

She hesitated just a second—perhaps because he was at the wheel. And then she flung her arms about him and almost blinded him with the warmth and perfume of her caress.

"That's what I care," she cried. And she kissed him until he put on the brakes in a small panic and brought the car to an abrupt halt in a tiny bank of slippery snow.

"You're crazy, Nan," he said.

"But I can't bear to have you go away like that," she cried.

She saw someone then across the street, and sanity returned to her.

"Start the car, Forr," she cried. "I see someone."

He obeyed at once.

"I just couldn't bear to end in a quarrel," she said sombrely. He did not speak, however, until there stood in front of them the silent Brotherhood House, with the sign in gold, "Dr. Carpenter," gleaming in the keen night.

"Well, then," he said inscrutably. "We won't end till to-morrow."

"So long as it isn't to-night!" she agreed.

She pressed his hand and ran up the snowy steps, a little uncertainly, and was inside the next instant in the little hallway, regret already in her heart over her weakness. Why hadn't she quarrelled, after all, and stood the pain of the thing?

What was the matter with her that she never could when the climax came?

She opened the door at the top, in her mind a conviction that David was still up. There was a shaft of light across the landing. Yes, he was smoking over by the big old-fashioned desk, she saw as she opened the door—his head in his hands, his eyes intent upon a mass of papers spread out before him.

"Hello, Treasure," he said without turning round.

For a second she hesitated, standing in the soft light of the lamp, the deep blue of the rug making a background for her, the black fur collar of her coat framing the vivid beauty of her face. Then she crossed to him swiftly and ruffled his hair as she bent over the desk, her heart filling with that sudden tenderness she could not account for.

"Hello," she said. "What's the grandpa doing?"

"Looking over the Brotherhood accounts," he answered.

"You're crazy, Dave," she said. "It's nearly two o'clock."

"I know," he answered, leaning back and taking her hand. "But Preck called me up from the *Press* office. Congress is going to declare war to-morrow."

"Is that so?" she said without the least trace of surprise.

"Yes. Preck is going to try for a commission right away."

War! A commission! The war came to her as a personal question immediately. War. . . .

She sat down on the divan, staring at him with wide-open eyes.

"Is that why you had the papers out?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"Oh," she said. "But you can't go, Dave, can you? With this position—and the strike, and—and everything?"

She meant it mostly as a request for reassurance, of course. But David waited only an appreciable instant.

"That's just what I've been trying to decide," he said.

Illogical emotion seized her. David go to war! When there was not any necessity for it! When there were so many others! When he was older! When the war didn't mean anything to Clewesbury —or—or Kerrigan Street, either—or any of those things he talked about!

"But men your age needn't go, need they? Men with wives?"

To her immense relief he laughed a little.

"You mean they probably won't need the grandpas? No," he said.

"No," she agreed. What would happen to her, indeed, if he ever went away? Sudden fear took possession of her. "Would you like to go?" she added. Her eyes had an indescribable look in them.

"Yes," said David, "I would."

"And leave me?"

"In spite of that, Nan," he said. He rose and stared into the graying fire. "After all, it's my country. Somebody has to go. And there aren't any too many doctors. I'm obligated in a way by the Base Hospital unit, too."

"I know, Dave——" she began. Her hands were curiously tense. "It's fine to want to go. But——"

Well, she wanted to say that there were other things than countries to think of, other things than strikes and Brotherhood Houses to consider. There were wives and love and passion! There was the obligation of husband to wife, of lover to sweetheart. Didn't it mean anything to him to leave her? When it would be the end of the world for her? When she would be left alone—to fail him forever.

But the words died on her lips. No, somehow, she had forfeited the right to say that. Her devotion was nothing for a man to consider—not David! When she had just confessed to passion with another man in the street outside not half an hour since.

A curious wave of self-contempt swept over her.

"Well, don't consider me, Dave," she said abruptly. "Just do—do what you think is right."

She did not know, as she took off the black ball dress in the tiny bedroom ten minutes later, that out in the living room all trace of her image had faded from David's mind—and before his eyes was only a picture of children's faces, crowding, crowding, wan and eager, pinched and old, with he himself, alone on Kerrigan Street in this Brotherhood House, and the world gone overseas. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

In Which David's Horns Begin to Appear and Forrester Stone Loses Patience

Like a giant firecracker that bursts with a fine bang, and then is succeeded by unexpected calm and silence—that was the way the war came to Clewesbury.

The actual conflict was over three thousand miles away, Clewesburyans told each other over their breakfast coffee, as they read the big headlines. No one could fight at such a great distance. The only object of the war, anyway—so Mr. Heinrichs asserted loudly at the club!—was to stop this submarine thing. There was no sense in sending our boys across the water for that! Keep the boys at home, out of that frightful inferno of mud and blood, and let a big force of destroyers sweep the submarines from the sea.

In the silence, Clewesbury searched its conscience. . . .

And then down on Kerrigan Street two armed company detectives and a striker engaged in a duel to the death, and Clewesbury awoke to the realities of life once more. Why, that strike was still going on! The leaders of it were dangerous men, too, with all the subversive ideas on free love and communism that threatened the Russian Revolution with tyranny if ever Kerensky lost his hold! Fechter's ideas were plain enough in the pamphlet he gave his unions to read and called it education.

Just the extracts in the *Press* were enough to convince any one of that. The thing was the old story, of dangerous agitators and leaders bamboozling the workingman, taking bribes and blackmailing honest, sincere employers. It was time for a state investigation! The thing couldn't go on!

An investigation of the unions: that was the thing! And jail for a few of the leaders. That was better than arbitration.

"Good God, do they believe all such mush?" David asked Preck in the grill room of the Lotos Club.

"Most of it," admitted Preck.

"Do you?"

"Some of it."

"But I know Fechter," said David earnestly. "He hasn't seen a copy of his boyish pamphlet in fifteen years, since he worked in Wales—until someone reprinted ten thousand copies. The Amalgamated has no money for pamphlets to-day. Who did it?"

Preck stirred uneasily.

"But why don't they forget it, and go back to work?" he argued. "The time for this stuff is past. We've gone to war. Does Fechter know that?"

"He knew it the same day Lewisohn and Van Wyck did," retorted David significantly.

"Meaning why don't they arbitrate?"

"Certainly," said David scornfully. "The kids can't stand it," he added with a sudden change in his voice.

"How many are you feeding?"

"Six thousand."

"I wonder Van Wyck doesn't call a halt on you."

"Because he doesn't dare," retorted David.

"Would he starve the kids for his damned United? The whole thing is a drive on the unions. That's all."

"You sound like an agitator yourself," Preck said coolly.

"I saw it begin," retorted David. . . .

To any one who lived on Kerrigan Street, it was becoming plainer every day that all the Junkers did not live in Germany. They lived wherever humanity had its abiding place—even Clewesbury. Why, every man was a potential Junker, if he let brutal self-interest become triumphant. The war went as deep as that. But these Junkers in Clewesbury seemed to think that because they were Americans they could not be Junkers. They did not seem to see that democracy could be enveloped by such a haze of personal, brutal selfishness that all trace of the thing for which men fought and died could be completely lost!

And yet if anything were clear, it was that from out of the illusion of material things, the eternal principles of peace, justice, and unselfishness were beginning to emerge as the only reality, the only stars by which to steer on the seas of industry as well as of politics, of public life as of private, of diplomacy as of business, in peace as in war, wherever the struggle for power existed.

The everlasting war, both in Flanders and in Clewesbury, was the fight of the Brotherhood of Humanity against selfish and autocratic power, against brutal self-interest whether in Andrew Van Wyck or Wilhelm Hohenzollern . . . or in Anton Fechter.

"Nothing to discuss!"

That was the banner of the Manufacturers' Association, so long as Andrew Van Wyck could control the majority and choke liberal opinion in

the committee room of the Chamber of Commerce where the association came together. But it could not be allowed to become the banner of America.

He went out of the grill, with a faint mist in his eyes, through which the face of Fechter seemed to grin—vague, shadowy. . . .

Only Preck's words, as they parted on the corner, made him realize how compelling he must have sounded.

"I'm afraid you're making a mistake, old man," Preck said then, running his hand across his forehead, and making his curly hair stand out at the proper angle. "There's nothing in this championing the masses stuff! It's only one thing out of many in life—and the other things will outweigh it in time for you."

"Such as——"

"Music, and books, and common tastes, and knowing how to eat, and social associations! You can't leave your own kind and be happy, Dave!"

"I don't propose to abandon Fitzhugh Street and Congress Avenue."

Preck stared at the passing traffic thoughtfully.

"But did it ever occur to you, Dave, that Congress Avenue might abandon you?"

"No," said David at once.

It wasn't reasonable, either, he thought as he took his way past the Square and over the railroad bridge. Preck didn't feel the thrill of certain kinds of achievement, somehow. That was why he felt the way he did!

But Preck wasn't America . . . .

It was more amusing than anything else, the newfound patriotism which seemed to possess many of his friends since the war fever had swept in a belated gust over Clewesbury. They had adopted a slightly superior tone, one by one, as they decided what they

would do. And yet war patriotism was better than no patriotism at all! Surely he shouldn't cavil at that. He ought to be glad that Tom Harding and Billy Kanter had decided to stick to the Hospital Unit and go, even though there did seem to be a rather large doubt in their minds whether the government would draft them anyway if they did not go.

The only thing that amused, perhaps, was their new attitude toward him. . . .

"I can stand that," he told Preck. "I've got my job cut out for me on Kerrigan Street just now."

"If people only understand it," Preck said with slightly lifted eyebrows.

"Good God, they can understand starving children, can't they?" he demanded.

But Preck just shrugged his shoulders this time. His own commission was secure and on the way now. After all, war was war—and when one's country went to war, one did also!

"I think that is the way he feels," David told his aunts in the quiet back lawn on Fitzhugh Street where they sometimes sat and made rag rugs. "Perhaps he is right. I don't know."

"Humph," muttered Hat. There was a good deal in what Preck said, that sniff meant, although she hated to agree with the Smart Aleck.

"But I would not go by Preck," Susan remarked quietly.

"Well, what's to hinder if the boy wants to?" Hat demanded.

"His conscience, I suppose," returned Susan serenely.

"Gammon," retorted Hat. To her, the idea of wasting conscience on a lot of foreigners and labour unions was drivel. If labour had its way there

wouldn't be any servants soon! And the Lord knew they were impossible enough already. . . .

"There will be plenty of chances to go to the war," Susan told him after they were alone. "I wouldn't let Preck or any one turn me from finishing my duty before I went."

"I haven't any choice, as a matter of fact," David told her.

It was rather ironical, he decided, as he took his way down to the Brotherhood House in the May sunshine, the way circumstances had turned out. It showed a contradiction somewhere, somehow, that he should have to stay upon Kerrigan Street in order to follow that same ideal for which Preck was going to Washington, and Kenny Watson and George Thomas to France. Was it because brutal self-interest anywhere effected an unconscious alliance with Junkerdom?

That was really all the thought that David was giving to his own personal reputation, in those days of the early summer. I doubt if it occurred to him in the least, despite Preck's remarks, that to Congress Avenue he might be becoming a Monster—all patriotic considerations aside. No, there were plenty of liberal citizens on Congress Avenue. Van Wyck and Edmunds and the Manufacturers' Association were not Clewesbury.

What if the Brotherhood House did find itself in temporary conflict with their plans?

The Chamber of Commerce was not America!

And yet the evidences of his Monsterhood were becoming quite unmistakable, by that time, had he been looking for them in the least. They showed themselves in the way that Jack Walton plainly shunned him on those rare occasions when he appeared at the Edmunds'; in the gradual disappearance from Doctor Musson's appeals at St. Peter's of any

mention of the work that our dear Doctor Carpenter was doing; and finally in the confidential regret that Mrs. Edmunds expressed to friend after friend as she voiced her disappointment over the course Doctor Carpenter had seen fit to pursue—the Brotherhood House which should prevent strikes and all such immoral things, actually supporting one! She had heard that he was a socialist, too—and in Germany they were responsible for letting the Kaiser go to war. . . .

Everyone could see what their pretensions amounted to!

It was a great deal like being a modern renegade, wasn't it! Like that—that Brandt, wasn't it, who was a white man, and joined the Iroquois against the American Colonists!

It was the Clewesbury *Press*, however, which first noticed his horns. Labour should forget its profits, the Press asserted, and go to work. No one could do labour a poorer service than to pretend that Clewesbury looked with any favour on its pretensions—a fact which certain reformers might do well to ponder unless their animus had blinded them to any sense of justice! No amount of amateur doctors could change the basic economic facts against which the strike had run its head. Nothing could be more un-American than to give support to what was practically the enemy—seeing that every hand would be needed to win the conflict just beginning!

To which David wrote an open letter that the Brotherhood House was concerned only with starving children, and if arbitration would accomplish the end sought for, the Brotherhood House would support arbitration—which would also release for the prosecution of the war the brains and experience of many members of the Chamber of Commerce. . . .

But the *Press* did not print his letter—and the horns grew a perceptible inch. . . .

"An empty gesture," Forrester told Nancy when she asked him about it. "Let them go back to work if they think so much of their children."

It was one of the few times that Nancy ever thought about the strike. A lot of men who worked in obscure lofts, the strikers were to her—men who stood in saloons nights, telling shady stories she did not wish to hear, who looked her up and down in a way that made her shrink, who swore dirty oaths and picked their teeth in the Owl restaurant—those were these striking people! But babies—well, that was different. . . .

"They're so cute and helpless, Forr!"

"Then let them take care of 'em," Stone said. "You've got to be thorough with a strike!"

"But David can't do that!"

Stone's disgust overcame him.

"Oh, David makes me tired," he said. "This pose of his!"

In the Morpeth Terrace library curious emotion invaded Nancy.

"I don't think it's a pose, Forr," she said.

"Don't tell me that!" Stone's voice hinted of irritation. "Don't you suppose he likes being the head of the Brotherhood House, likes being the man to do all this fine, spectacular relief, likes playing the Kindly Father to all these poor people—and getting fat at it? Doing what his sweet desires dictate! Of course he does! He wouldn't give up his job for all the strikers in the world. It's his bluff, his game, feeding children! It doesn't cost him anything."

"But why shouldn't he?" she asked curiously. That was what the Brotherhood House was for, she thought.

"Because his stockholders aren't behind him," Stone retorted instantly. "Do you suppose we're such fools as to give aid to strikers—when we put

up the money from the Federated Charities? Why, I could refuse to sign the checks to-morrow, if I thought it was worth it! It hasn't been worth it so far!"

"Why not?" she asked.

"Because it hasn't made a vital difference," he said. "We'll win without it."

Well, he probably would, she told herself as she stood a moment alone, after lunch, looking out over the sunny garden where the many-coloured lines of crocuses made tiny patterns on the tender grass, and the vivid red of the bushes by the poplars and the half-opened leaves of the maples told of another May.

But he would find out he was mistaken if he tried to force David. The talk in the newspapers so far had served only to stiffen him, as had the attitude of Mrs. Edmunds. If he had decided that it was right now for the Brotherhood House to see this strike through, he would not change—no matter what it cost him. . . .

How simple life must be with a character like that!

It was not absolutely simple, however, she realized a week later as she stood with him in a street car on Cuyahoga Avenue and watched the National Guard regiments march past the crowded Square toward the Union Station. Just a thin column of fours, marching without pomp or circumstance, these ordinary young men were—here and there a man without his blanket roll across his neck. Just a column marching, marching in a thin drizzle of rain down the car tracks, the Spanish War veterans ahead, groups of small boys behind, an occasional girl upon a guardsman's arm, staring up into his face . . . and up ahead the band!

All ordinary young men. . . .

And yet they were doing what David really wanted

to. She could tell that as the vague destiny of the thing caught at her throat and she looked up at David and saw that he was clutching the street-car strap tightly, and there were tight little lines around his mouth and an odd brightness in his eyes. That character of his made him want to go—and yet wouldn't let him. That wasn't simple. That must mean a struggle of some sort. Perhaps even character didn't answer all the problems of existence easily. . . .

She thought of that a little soberly, while they hurried on to Fitzhugh Street lest they be late to dinner and Aunt Hat sit in judgment upon them —and then forgot it in the press of her own affairs.

It was the only time until the end that she ever caught a glimpse of those endless doubts that possessed David all that summer. She never knew of the nights when he sat in the Brotherhood study trying to decide his duty. Nor of the moments he spent in the Lotos grill with Preck before that fortunate gentleman secured his commission in the Military Intelligence. Nor of the day when the Base Hospital Unit to which he had belonged marched down past the Square and into the Union Station and departed, while he stood on the sidewalk and old Doctor Lodge of the General Hospital cut him as he passed and the line looked straight ahead.

He had refused to go, and they had filled his place with young Austin Strong. . . .

An ever-present source of dim uneasiness and pride the thing was to David. And yet for Nancy it remained a thing apart.

She laughed with him over the amazing speeches for democracy that her father and Edmunds made in the Lyric Theatre; over the endless argument and gossip of the draft, as incomes shifted and new de-

pendents appeared and unheard of ailments laid cautious patriots low; over the surprising figures that stood out suddenly as the real defenders of Clewesbury. But she never knew that for him many times the laughter had in it a touch of anguish. No, she thought, he had decided not to go—and that had ended it. . . .

But it had not ended it, in the least. Every day merely brought it up again in still more acute form.

David realized that as he stood in his runabout by the Square on Labour Day and the children of Kerrigan Street marched in straggling lines down Congress Avenue carrying their banner inscribed to the Brotherhood House and the Citizens' Consumers' League, and set up their treble cry when they saw him. It was the only part of the parade, outside of the munition workers, which received any demonstration. The muttered taunt of the crowd as the Amalgamated groups went past, "Do your fighting in France!" showed the true sentiment of Clewesbury.

Well, he must share in that opprobrium, too. That must be what the general opinion of him was. He had not really seen any of his old friends of Congress Avenue in two months—not since Preck went to Washington. The telephone calls he had been wont to receive concerning the pleasures of a little poker game, or once in a while a little foursome at golf—they had ceased, too. And neither Doctor Musson nor Forrester Stone seemed to call any more meetings of the Brotherhood House executive committee. They had not done so since the day he had given Fechter the use of the big assembly hall in which to stage his protests against the armed thugs from Pittsburgh which the manufacturers were bringing in as company guards and sheriff's deputies.

The view, "One Hundred Per Cent. American,"

indeed, seemed to grow with every day in the columns of the Press and in the minds of people in Clewesbury. Anything that wasn't the desired percentage seemed to stand little or no chance, no matter what might be the principle behind it. It was like a sort of general swallowing up of all progress in the roar of a mob. That accounted in some measure for the hostility that he was incurring. But it did not make his position any easier. It was not possible, surely, to abandon the childhood of Kerrigan Street to starvation now merely because his efforts had become unpopular. A duel to the death, now, this strike was! The manufacturers would win with hunger as their weapon if they could find no other way. But that only increased his obligation. For what purpose would a Brotherhood House stand here on Kerrigan Street once he deserted the principles of fair play, and became a mere ally of the Manufacturers' Association? What use would there be in talking democracy and brotherhood after that?

Kerrigan Street would turn from Congress Avenue forever once it saw the Brotherhood House taking up the cudgels against it. . . .

And who would blame it?

That was David's conclusion and firm belief during those weeks of the late fall as passions and animosities ran higher and higher in Clewesbury, and he steered his course with ever-increasing difficulty. He had no conception, of course, of the curious vindictiveness that was mounting upward and upward in Stone as the strike dragged its weary length into months and months and even December saw no apparent end in sight. It was a vindictiveness that was inclusive—the Brotherhood House and its ever-increasing aid to these strikers' families on Kerrigan Street; the virtuous superiority of

David's attitude toward him and all practical employers; the endless inertia of the strike situation in Clewesbury, while affairs called him more urgently every day to New York; the exasperating indecision and temperamental moods of Nancy, with her conclusions that never concluded anything, her decisions that never decided.

Wasn't it possible to get decisions on some of these things—must they all hang fire indefinitely?

Particularly, was there any reason why he should not force Nancy to his views now?

A clearer perception of his folly, now, in the Man of Destiny—and of the ways of women! Delay, befog, obscure—those appeared to be the favourite verbs in milady's dictionary. Things had not changed a single iota since the Everdell dance, months ago! Despite all his arguments, and efforts, and quarrels!

He concluded that for the tenth time, as he sat in the interminable conferences of the Manufacturers' Association. Well, perhaps a woman would hold off a man as long as he would let her; as long as he refrained from forcing her. Perhaps it was part of her primitive nature—the present-day form of her ancient desire for a master. And he had let Nancy hold him off because her relations to David had obscured his clear view of the situation! He had been like some moon calf, out of a provincial town, in love with a sophisticated Broadway star—some lovesick boy. He had been afflicted with strange weakness where she was concerned, just blindly following his emotions, letting her lead where she would. . . .

He should have used his brains! Intelligence got a man what he wanted in the business world. It should hold good in picking an elusive passion flower in a Clewesbury garden.

What did intelligence suggest?

He pondered that for some days. And then a solution came to him as Winter shook her cloak grayly and the December snowflakes drifted along the sidewalks of Congress Avenue, blowing in little flurries along the broad asphalt of Cuyahoga Avenue, straight at the open porches of the General Hospital where Nancy was taking her Red Cross Nurses' Aid course.

"Yes, I can appreciate your position," he told her rather coolly, as he drove her down to the Pontiac. "Living with a man you don't love, eating his food. It must be extremely difficult."

In the quiet of the Pompeian Room, Nancy studied his face intently. She was always intensely conscious of all emotional changes—and something in him had changed, she was sure!

"What makes you say that?" she asked.

"Isn't it time?"

"The words—yes!" she admitted with a tiny gesture. "But what made you say them?"

"Just as a preliminary," he began.

"A preliminary to something unpleasant," she said swiftly.

"A preliminary to stating the truth," he remarked.

"I knew it," she retorted. "I can always tell. What is it?"

He had counted upon her genius for emotion, however—and discounted it! "Well, there is a point," he said deliberately, "after which consideration for David becomes injury to yourself. Your own character can't stand it. It becomes the part of the coward. I've just been realizing it. I've been realizing, too, that when you allow him to make a coward and a liar out of you—then you are allowing a situation for which there can be no excuse or issue. And I am the one who is allowing it. Because it is

all my fault," he added abruptly. "I am the one who is making the coward and the deceiver out of you! And I can't have that." He looked up from the fork with which he played. "Not if I love you—and want what is best for you. Do you see what I mean?"

She watched him a moment, a curious expression in her eyes.

"You aren't making anything out of me," she said.

"Just as plainly as if you were clay," he answered.

She resented that, of course.

"I'm doing it of my own free will."

"But even that doesn't change the fact," he pointed out. "It is just as degrading for you." He drank from his glass. "And I can't have that. It has got to end—and I mean end sincerely, decently." He stared at the tablecloth. "I have some decent ideas and feelings, you know, despite what David and Fechter and company say of me. I really do love you, you know."

"I know," she said softly. She felt a strange sense of finality in his voice, somehow—that same odd feeling she had had when her father had left her in the blue bedroom after she had told him about David. His unconscious admission that the attacks upon him left a little sting, touched her, too, in unexpected fashion. And yet her intuition told her of something hidden, something unexpressed, something he was not telling her. Her memory groped for an instant, trying to recall a similar sensation. And then she remembered.

That first afternoon he came to the Brotherhood House! The feeling that he might be playing a game as well as she! That was the occasion when she had felt like this.

It gave her a desire to be obstinate, although she could find no actual excuse for it.

"There isn't anything new about any of these things," she said.

"No," he agreed. "Only they are plainer. They have driven me to a point where decision is a necessity, if I am to see you. We owe each other a real, honest decision—whether we are to live together after it, or never see each other again."

"Yes," she agreed to that.

"Why don't you take two weeks to think it over, Nan—and then render a final decision?" he asked. "A real decision."

"Two weeks!" she repeated. His decisiveness appalled her—she who could never decide anything except upon impulse!

"Two weeks alone," he amended.

Two weeks alone. . . .

"I can't do that," she said sombrely, after a pause. Obstinacy was not influencing her now. Visions of embarrassing questions, impossible reasons, telltale answers had crowded upon her.

"Yes, you can," he exclaimed. "I've thought of that."

"But I've no place to go," she pointed out, taking refuge in detail.

"New York," he answered. "Rhea Winter's house."

"I've no reason for going."

"A visit," he supplied. He stared at her with smouldering dark eyes. "A place where you can think by yourself. Where you won't see David every hour——"

"But——" she began once more.

"You've got to, Nan," he told her fiercely. "We can't go on like this. I'm at the end of my rope. The world has eyes, too. Every day makes the thing much harder, more impossible, more disastrous—destroys everything that makes for happiness for

you. We've procrastinated for months—so long that I can hardly believe, so long that our intentions have almost perished. Good God, we don't want that. Courage is better than that. Courage to decide to take the leap. It only takes a minute, and a word!"

He leaned toward her, passionately eloquent.

"But not to-night, Forr," she begged. "Not to-night——"

He did not allow her to irritate him.

"All right," he said. "This week——"

"This week," she repeated.

"Saturday," he said definitely.

And she did not dispute it. . . .

For her, the week that followed was the most incomprehensible week of her entire existence. She did not see or hear from Forrester, and so was ignorant of his lengthy meetings with Edmunds and Van Wyck and of the momentous decisions they came to. And yet she thought of little else but him and David and the almost certain wreck she saw ahead. She went through all the little tasks that the Kerrigan Street apartment demanded, and yet she was not there in the least. Like some dark shadow in the mind hung the promise to decide, blotting out everything else, reducing her to a mere automaton. Something vital was bound up with this decision, she felt, even though it was nothing more in itself than a decision to go away and then really decide. A curious conviction in her, so far, that she had been loyal to David—perhaps because she had never planned anything definite, and merely drifted with passion's tide. But this would be definite. This would be frank admission that she considered definitely the possibility of being disloyal.

What was a war or a strike or a Brotherhood House beside that?

The thought ripped open the conventional seam of her thoughts like a knife. It would mean that she really considered never sitting here again before the pleasant fire in her own chair while David smoked; that she considered turning her back forever on all that they had gone through together since the night in the Morpeth Terrace garden—the lights and theatres of Chicago—how could Forrester want her!—the funny meals with Aunt Hat and Susan; the little jaunts around Kerrigan Street where mystery whispered at the tables; the intimacy of David's hours of weariness when he was like a little boy. . . .

Like a knife drawn across the whole pattern of friendship and affection of her life so far!

That was what it would be.

She thought of that for a full day at least, little tears in her eyes, when she put away the pipes David left about the room so carelessly, or laid away the things back from the laundry.

And yet that was all in the past, she realized abruptly, toward the middle of the week. How long could she stand it here now, if Forrester were to go out of her life forever? Just these few days alone afternoons showed what the future would be! Could she stand that—did she have the strength! Or would she try it desperately for a few years only to find out in the end that she could not stand it—and had lost Forrester, too?

She would never be able to decide that, she concluded at last—not if she went away for a thousand weeks alone. The whole thing was like having two friends, and not being completely happy with either of them, and yet knowing that they were distinctly uncongenial together! What amount of thought could ever change that?

She knew she had to do something about it, how-

ever; and perhaps that was why the imps of procrastination won her so easily in the end. Yes, she would go to Rhea Winters. There was nothing final in that. Perhaps, too, in New York away from everything, the whole affair might take on a different aspect. She might find strength enough to arrive at some conclusion.

It would not be anything irretrievable, at least. . . .

It was, in fact, ridiculously easy, she thought a week later, as she opened Rhea's answer to her letter, and read the flashy, black-stroked handwriting she remembered so well at school. Rhea would be crazy to have her come; Rhea would be delighted; Rhea would never forgive her if she didn't come; Rhea was making her plans even now to have her come; Rhea expected a French journalist and an English poet those same weeks and it would help her immensely! Promise Rhea that she would come! Right after Christmas!

She did not procrastinate after that.

"I think I'd like to go," she told David when he came home for dinner. She felt a flush of shame come over her as she spoke—how hateful it was to deceive!

"It will do you good," David said at once. "I only wish I had thought of it myself!"

He stared hard at the shaded candles, and then he leaned across and took her hand.

"You don't ever think I have forgotten about you, do you, Nan?" he asked. "Because I am so infernally busy?"

"Why, no," she protested.

He stood up suddenly, and came over and took her in his arms.

"You're too sweet for words to me, Nan," he said.

"No," she said in a low voice.

"You are!" he said.

"I wish I could be," she said suddenly. And she buried her face in her hands, of a sudden, while he stood above her, mystified.

"You are," he repeated.

"Don't say it again," she cried.

She felt the need of explanation at once, of course.

"I'm tired and nervous, I think," she said. "It's too much Clewesbury!"

"And too much Kerrigan Street," said David. "The place is like a mined field these days."

"Yes," she agreed.

"New York will be a tonic!" he ended. It had stood for that to him since those gay, youthful days on lower Fifth Avenue! Nancy would find it the same. . . .

It was two days later that she told Forrester.

"I'm going next week," she told him, in the quiet of the library on Morpeth Terrace, where they sat before the smouldering fire.

"Fine," he said steadily, although sudden exultation had gripped his heart.

"Two weeks of an inferno, rather!" she said with abrupt passion.

"With happiness beyond," he told her. . . .

"Maybe," she answered.

"Why, there isn't any doubt of that, Nan," he reassured her.

"But I can only see the inferno," she almost whispered. Rhea would only want to talk. She knew that. And go gadding—to the theatres and the shops and the hotels for dancing, while she herself would carry about with her, locked up, this inferno of doubt and anguish. It would be no different than if she should stay for the two weeks on Morpeth Terrace with her father and Aunt Minnie—so far as loneliness was concerned.

What was it that made people poison their own lives so?

"I wish it was over," she ended.

"Yes, so do I," he agreed. "but I think we both will wonder why we delayed any decision so long—once it is over," he said, as he escorted her out into the broad hall. "It is the only thing to do. We'll be glad."

"Perhaps," Nancy agreed.

"I'll have to say good-bye for now, anyway," he said. "Your father is waiting for me upstairs."

"All right," she replied. "Good-bye."

He watched her go down the steps just an instant before he turned back into the hall, but it was not with any expression of doubt or unhappiness on his features. No, he was thinking—if she once got away to New York, he would see that she never came back. There were many ways of doing that—even to using a little force if necessary. That was all she required now—to be completely conquered! And he would not lose sight of her for an instant, once he followed her to New York and got his apartment on Park Avenue in running order again. . . .

He ascended the steps slowly to Van Wyck's smoking den at that conclusion, exultation sweeping into his heart once more.

Well, that would afford a decision on that subject. And there only remained the question of throwing Carpenter out of the Brotherhood House, and putting the real clamps on this strike.

Thank God he was dealing with a regular man like Van Wyck! Van Wyck would mix blood and iron as he should. . . .

He turned into the den with the thought.

There should be no trouble in that, anyhow. There was no woman mixed up in that!

CHAPTER XIV

Wherein Both David and Nancy Discover the Truth Although Neither of Them Realizes the Fact

I wonder if I can ever convey to you all the grim foreboding and disheartening conviction, the nervous expectancy and sombre emotion of those last three days of that year, as gradually the drama of Kerrigan Street rose to its climax, and inside the walls of the Brotherhood House belief and temptation struggled to the death, oblivious of the tragedy outside the windows?

Like watching two distinct dramas it was to Forrester Stone—two dramas to each of which he held the key, and so rather despised the players. No touch of pity in him for David! Rather a sense of satisfaction at the achievement of one more victory, one more step on the road to Destiny which he had surveyed for himself. This strike had held him too long away from New York and Washington. There was his real field. Thank God he could get back to it, with one more rung in his ladder securely fastened, and one more strategic position occupied in the long fight to control public opinion! No one could tell what might come out of this war. He must be in position to take advantage of the peculiar circumstances of the conflict. He must not be still puttering in Clewesbury. . . .

The choking off of this Brotherhood House would do two things, also. It would kill off immediately

any chance of this David Carpenter rising to any place of influence, and it would end the strike. Public opinion was against these strikers already. All chance for them would die once this place ceased stirring up hornets' nests, once people were given a chance to forget. The strike would be enveloped in a silence like the tomb then. And that would do the work. Funds were at the vanishing point already in Fechter's treasury, so Harrigan had reported from his place of vantage on the Labour Council. Six thousand starving children added—and no one knew how many wives!—would bring the men to reason, for good and all.

Van Wyck had seen that at once, and even Edmunds had agreed, once the necessity had been pointed out to him. For what had they put over the Federated Charities, indeed, if not for just such emergencies as this? Doctor Musson and Mrs. Edmunds need only be instructed how to vote in the next meeting of the Executive Committee and the thing was over. Pratt could be depended on, anyway. There needn't be any outcry, or publicity connected with that! Carpenter could just resign, or be fired if he really stuck out for a row. Which he wouldn't! It wasn't to a man's interest to do that when nothing of his own was at stake.

The thing was as good as settled. . . .

David caught a hint of that, two days later, as he sat in the first meeting of the Executive Committee for four months and noticed how Doctor Musson shuffled his feet and avoided his eyes while Doctor Dunstan stared steadily at the floor and Herbert Pratt of the Guarantee Trust made interminable notes on a pad as they all waited for Forrester Stone and Mrs. Edmunds to arrive.

Certainty came to him as that lady came in with a curt nod and disposed of herself beside Forrester

Stone, and they all drew up at the dark wood table in the study, while Stone kept his eyes fastened upon the vista of tenements outside the window.

Yes, there was every appearance of a program for the meeting.

Could they really be intending to do it? After all of Miss Haynes' efforts, after twenty years of fair play and sincerity?

He read his reports slowly, oddly aware of the silent hostile atmosphere about him in the instants when he paused, aware of it vividly as he took up his recommendations for the winter, and the needs of the four children's milk stations. Yes, there was going to be a fight. . . .

"Altogether, about twice the budget of this period just past?" Stone commented with a curiously judicial air.

"At the least," David answered. "Figuring the Consumers' League and the public gifts as equalling their figures—which is doubtful, with all the demands for money and loans which are scheduled."

"It's a lot of money," said Pratt.

"Yes," said David.

The silence that followed was broken by Stone once more.

"Well," he said abruptly. "We haven't got the money this year. The Federated Charities can't find it. We're cutting everything in an endeavour to help win the war. We'll have to use the knife here, too. Don't you agree, Mrs. Edmunds?"

"The war," she said, "is the only thing that matters."

"Certainly," said Pratt.

"What do you mean specifically by that?" inquired David.

"The Milk Fund for these children, for one thing," said Stone. "We have no real business spending

such huge amounts on that. It isn't actually relieving poverty. We're being subjected to severe criticism on that ground, anyway. We can begin with that."

It was David who broke the silence.

"Well," he said. "You might as well cut out the Brotherhood House completely, then." There was no use dodging the issue, of course. The thing might as well be put plainly, squarely.

"Oh, cutting budgets always hurts," Doctor Musson palliated smoothly.

"But this will kill," said David.

It was a distinctly arrogant gesture with which Mrs. Edmunds turned and stared at him.

"I don't think I understand you, Doctor Carpenter," she said. "What do you mean when you say it will kill?"

"I mean it will destroy the Brotherhood House just as much as if you tore down the bricks and plaster," he answered.

"Why?" interjected Stone coldly.

"Because it will brand us as the tool of United Clothing," said David quietly.

"What!" Mrs. Edmunds' gasp was plainly audible.

"The Federated Charities has the money," David pointed out.

"But not for this particular thing!" Stone's voice was harsh now.

"Exactly!"

In the quiet study the voices had all the whir and clash of steel swords, rousing even Herbert Pratt from his short absorption in his white hands.

"Because we have done a particular thing," he inquired blandly, "does that require that we never cease doing it, under penalty of insincerity?"

"We mustn't cease now," replied David.

"Why this emphasis upon now?" inquired Stone sharply.

"Is there any need to stress that?" asked David.

It was the first time any real life seemed to stir in Doctor Musson.

"I fail to see," he said, "what business a charity has got going into industrial disputes. It amounts to an interference—a taking of sides. I think it has been a mistake from the beginning."

"It seems to me," Mrs. Edmunds said, "I have heard more criticism of the Brotherhood House since the strike began than in all the twenty years Miss Haynes ran it."

"More criticism from Congress Avenue, perhaps," said David quietly.

"That's where the money comes from," Pratt stated.

In the silence, David stared at the five oddly impassive faces.

"Do you realize," he asked, "that if you withdraw your aid from these children now, you can never put another dollar on Kerrigan Street?"

"Why not?" It was Mrs. Edmunds' voice.

"Because Kerrigan Street will see you damned first," he replied.

"Don't you believe it," sneered Stone.

"Kerrigan Street will believe just one thing," said David steadily. "It will believe that Jonathan Edmunds and Andrew Van Wyck and Adolf Lewisohn control this Brotherhood House body and soul. It will believe that democracy and justice and charity are a farce. It will believe eternally that the dollars you give to this house are soiled with the blood of their children. It will believe that Fechter is right when he says that America is run for the Big Interests, by the Big Interests, in the name of the Big Interests. It will believe

that 'Nothing to Discuss' and 'United Clothing' are the real Stars and Stripes of this country, that the charter of the Chamber of Commerce has supplanted the Declaration of Independence. Charity for all—except those who disagree! Justice for all—except strikers! Democracy for all—except labour!"

He rose slowly, an odd detached sound still in his voice.

"You and I know it isn't true. This Brotherhood House is for Anton Fechter's children just as it is for Adolf Lewisohn's children or your children, Mrs. Edmunds. There isn't any difference to our eyes—there isn't any difference to Clewesbury's eyes, to the great mass of real Americans. That's what we've got to consider in taking a step of this kind. Not what Van Wyck or Mr. Edmunds or one of any small interested group happens to think. This is America here! Not United Clothing. We've got to prove it to Kerrigan Street everlastingly. We can't starve six thousand children. We'll have to cut something else, somewhere else."

"Anything else," said Doctor Dunstan with abrupt vehemence.

"Or kill the Brotherhood House," added David. . . .

"Kill nothing," said Stone caustically. "This is all academic discussion. The point is we haven't the money. What are we going to do about that?"

"We've money for other things," said David directly.

"But its donors didn't give it for this purpose," retorted Stone.

"Only because this situation hadn't arisen."

"They wouldn't give it now."

"They would if they had the truth."

In the accusing silence Stone rose sharply.

"Unsupported opinion!" he said vigorously.

"Absolutely beside the point. Public opinion is against it."

Unusual abruptness seized Doctor Musson.

"Carpenter," he said, "I don't think you understand. Your feelings are perfectly human, creditable. But the great majority of the people who gave this money do not care to see it used for this purpose which you champion. This Brotherhood House is a charity. If you wish to expend such great sums in this cause, collect them for that purpose. Spend those sums. But these are charitable funds, donated for philanthropic purposes—not to encourage foreigners to agitate and riot, and to encourage revolution. You might as well ask Mrs. Edmunds to finance a strike against her own husband—as to use the generous sums she has contributed for any such purpose."

"That's about the case," said Pratt in his sharp staccato.

"Very well put," approved Mrs. Edmunds.

"What it comes down to, then," said David slowly, "is that you are willing to aid only those whom it is to your interest to aid? You are willing to see little children die in Clewesbury rather than interfere with someone's profit? Rather than aid someone with whom you do not agree?"

"Why, not in the least," protested Mrs. Edmunds angrily.

"Why should we interfere in this dispute?" cried Doctor Musson.

"Not even when children are starving?" exclaimed David, a look in his eyes as if he were viewing a collection of strange animals around this dark wood table. "You will let those mothers and children come to the milk stations next Monday to sit outside and only read a sign, 'Closed'? In your own city—not China or Belgium?"

"They only need to go to work, in order not to starve," said Mrs. Edmunds quickly.

"It may bring the damn fools to their senses," remarked Stone.

"You think that sort of thing will bring them to sweet reasonableness?" asked David quietly.

"Then let them go to work," muttered Pratt.

"Which they won't do so long as they've an ounce of courage and manhood left!"

"Then they don't deserve anything!" said Doctor Musson angrily.

"Why should we support them?" asked Stone sharply. "This thing is a test of strength. Do you expect us to aid the enemy?"

"Then, in God's name, why a Brotherhood House?" said David. Like a flash of fire coming suddenly in a quiet summer sky, that tone from him was. "Why not strip to the garb of Attila, and have done with the sloppy mouthings? Have done with Abraham Lincoln and Christ! Tear down your banners of humanity and democracy and brotherhood—and put up your true flag of greed and property and selfishness! Property first! Greed first! Selfishness first! Profits before human happiness! Profits before children! Why not do that?"

Stone was on his feet in an instant.

"Because that is the creed of the strikers!" he said angrily. "Because that is the thing we are fighting. Children! They don't care about children—all they're doing is using you, making a dupe of you! They're only out for profits, for wages, for money! Crooks and money grabbers! A lot of wops, over here to make money! That's what they are——"

"Because you've forced them to it!"

"Brotherhood! Bah! That's only Fechter's smoke screen, to delude his poor dupes. He's looking out for just Anton Fechter, and a nice easy job——"

"He's taking a hard road to that!"

"Everybody's out for himself in this world. These wops will take the bread and butter out of our mouths if we let them. Higher wages to-day! To-morrow, it will be the plants themselves. Grab! Grab! You don't know labour the way I do. You see just this little sentimental piece of work on Kerrigan Street. Why, it's only the manufacturer's associations that stand between you and the worst tyranny the country ever saw. What business has charity got breaking that down?"

"This house should change their spirit into the mould of our ideals and institutions!" It was Doctor Musson's most sonorous tone. "To change the heart of man! Win men for Christ! That's what this house should stand for—an outpost of the church!"

"Make converts in the tenements to one hundred per cent. Americanism, I suppose," said David quietly. "So babies can starve for Christ!"

Anger flooded Doctor Musson's ruddy face.

"You are blasphemous, Carpenter," he said angrily.

"Let us leave that to God," said David.

"But we are not compelled to listen, at least." It was Mrs. Edmunds' most frigid tone. Almost a shudder in her at the use of the "strip"! Why, how incredibly vulgar! This meeting was becoming entirely unnecessary, too!

"There are plenty of people in Clewesbury who will, nevertheless," said David.

"Though that doesn't concern us." Pratt pulled out his watch.

"No, let us call the meeting adjourned," said Doctor Musson heavily.

"By all means," agreed Mrs. Edmunds.

"And the matter settled," added Stone coldly.

He looked around. "Unless you consider a vote necessary?"

"I guess not," said Dunstan abruptly. "Carpenter and I seem to be in the minority."

"Meeting adjourned, then," said Stone coolly.

He stood rather hesitant, nevertheless, at the end of the long table, before his papers, as the others put on their coats, and outside Mrs. Edmunds chauffeur speeded his engine in the cold air, preparatory to going.

"I don't think I would do anything rash on this matter, Carpenter," he said as he buttoned his fur coat tight around his neck. "A few people might agree with you—but not enough to make it worth your while to make any public appeal. Sentiment is against any more charity drives or appeals just now, anyway. Possibly you exaggerate matters down here. Better think it over carefully, before our action becomes effective."

"I shall," said David, unmoved.

He did not move once, as they departed, one by one, an odd hesitation apparent in their manner. Nor did he notice the hand that Forrester held out finally.

"No, let's not befog the issue," he said slowly.

"As you like." Stone shrugged his shoulders as he turned away. "But I'd advise you to think it over, anyway."

Advise him to think it over!

Contempt swept through David at the words. Think it over! When nothing could be plainer than that this charity was a farce—that it represented nothing but its owners, that Van Wyck and Stone and all the rest of them cared nothing for any brotherhood of humanity nor any ideal America, either. They were willing to alleviate poverty so long as it did not cost them anything in particular.

They were willing to do anything for the poor, in Tolstoi's phrase, except "get off their backs!" When it cost them anything, they were not willing. They were only willing to give back to Pollock's bar in charity a pitiful portion of what business could sweat out of it. Americanism to them meant things as they were, one hundred per cent. Americanism, anything that kept them in their present position. They were not looking for a democracy that would reduce their privileges. Patriotism consisted in strengthening those parts of the law and industry that made their profits secure. That was their ideal of America—themselves!

Well, thank God, all of Congress Avenue did not feel this way about Kerrigan Street. All ministers of the gospel were not Doctor Mussons! There was John Foster, of the Second Presbyterian, with his open forum for all comers, and his old Scotch congregation coming faithfully from East Clewesbury to rub elbows with the Ghetto at his doors. There was Bob Hanford, of the Clewesbury Press. There were numberless others who did not feel this way about things—although he could not pick out any one from Congress Avenue just now, not any one socially or financially prominent. But there must be thousands more, only waiting for someone to voice their thoughts. They could be roused. This Brotherhood House was not the only institution in Clewesbury.

A public campaign even might be started, and arbitration, not hunger, made the judge of this strike. Before God, he could try that!

How else could he face Fechter, and all these thousands of Kerrigan Street to whom he had been trying to show the faith of America as he saw it? How else confess to failure? These few financial Junkers were not America or Clewesbury. No, by

God, fair play for the children of Kerrigan Street, no matter what the industrial dispute!

He would carry that slogan from one end of this city to the other. . . .

Nancy never forgot how he told that to her at dinner that night; nor how he came home at midnight, his eyes still ablaze but grim lines around his mouth.

"Neither the *Press* nor *Courier* would print a line for me," he said grimly. "Not even as an advertisement. Afraid of your father and Edmunds and their advertisers."

"Is that what Bob said?" she asked him.

"Oh, no, Bob said that after all Stone had simply decided that the money in the charity drive hadn't been given specifically for Kerrigan Street—and the papers couldn't quarrel with that decision. An advertisement, asking for funds from the public now, would look like a slap at Edmunds and your father."

He lit his pipe with an improvised taper at the dying fire.

"There isn't a hall to be rented in this city. Not even Convention. I'd give a good deal to know what hold United Clothing has on the Mayor and the chief of police. They wouldn't let me use it for any mass meeting of any kind. Nor can I have a permit for an open-air meeting. Afraid of disturbance, Chief Carter grinned at me. Orders from higher up, John Foster thinks. He has loaned me the Second Presbyterian auditorium. We'll have our protest meeting there and begin our campaign. It shows where we'd be without a fearless church."

He blew swift clouds from his pipe.

"We'll carry this thing before the people if we have to turn Clewesbury upside down. I'm going to fight."

Long after weariness and overpowering desire for

sleep had come to Nancy, he was still outlining to her, in their bedroom, just what he proposed to do. . . .

Nancy never forgot how that resolve of David's filled all his waking hours during those last two days —overshadowing everything else, shutting out her own actions from his consciousness, while he made those endless calls and talks and unending visits to newspaper offices, to John Foster's, to the Consumers' League, to the Lyric Theatre. It never seemed to occur to him that beneath this fight of his, another drama might be going on—that Nancy might be leaving his life forever, while he gave her hurried, casual kisses morning and night.

Like some swift passage of the sun when the earth was young, were the passing hours of those two days to her, marking off with intolerable, oppressing, terrible swiftness the moments until she would be really gone. She knew intuitively, in some strange fashion, that it was more than a mere departure. Yes, she would see Forrester in New York, of course. He would come and get her, and they would have luncheons, teas, dinners, and theatre parties together. And she would never be able to leave it—filled with the glamour of his passion—never be able to come back to this dun street, and the endless dim afternoons, and the vacant sewing parties on Congress Avenue, and the Red Cross rooms.

Just industrial talks on Kerrigan Street, and vacant days in Clewesbury, while the summer of life bloomed and faded, and autumn came and her beauty fled, and she was an old woman with withered memories.

That would be the prospect Clewesbury would hold out to her.

Not even the thought of David would be able to bring her back to that. New York would call to her too strongly. Perhaps she had been made that

way—made for emotion after emotion, passion after passion—to taste all the jars of life, one after the other, even if they ended in disillusion and satiety and death. David had not changed her, any more than marriage had. Conquest and passion were still her ruling motives, her real personality—the personality David had never seen. He loved a person of his own creation, believed in a woman who did not exist, just as he believed in a city of his own creation, an America of his own imagining. He did not know her. He did not have the least idea of the emotions and temptations which had always stirred her.

Marriage had only made stronger that wall between them so that now he would never see the truth. Life for her was not achievement—it was emotion.

And she would have it, or die, even if she had to overthrow all the walls of the world. What else was there, for a woman?

Every detail of that last day on Kerrigan Street lay always etched in her mind in unforgettable, immortal strokes—the curious glances Annie Murphy gave her in the study: the futile remarks of old John as he laboriously fixed the furnaces so that not a drop of heat could possibly reach any part of the buildings; the crowd of children kicking their heels outside on the icy kerb, waiting for milk distribution hour; the jump her heart gave when Kitty called up and said she would be down after dinner to take her to the train; the moments she spent in silence, staring into the half-packed trunk before her —and then the hours of waiting, of interminable waiting, while outside the snow fell silently, endlessly, covering all the rough corners and edges of Kerrigan Street with the soft cloak of beauty. . . .

How much did Kitty suspect of this whole affair? Or Aunt Hat—or her own father?

What a strange thing: to live twenty-four years

and at the end have no soul in whom to confide, no one from whom to get advice! And what an incredibly hard thing it seemed to be—just to leave here. It was like leaving a child, somehow, to leave David alone in this great Brotherhood House, with only the empty apartment across the yard to go to at night. It seemed almost as if it would be easier to stay on and on, dropping more and more of the pretense that was between them until David discovered the truth himself.

He lived in such a world of his own creation that he did not see anything except what he wanted to see!

He only wanted Maria to get the dinner early to-night so that he would have an opportunity to go to Fechter's mass meeting and get back before her midnight train—to say good-bye to her. The whole thing was as completely hidden from him as that. She would be back in two weeks, he thought.

She went down into the Brotherhood study after he had gone, with a curious desire to talk to someone, to keep herself busy until it was time to go. Even hearing Annie Murphy and old John quarrel was preferable to being alone in that upstairs living room.

They were still at it, she recognized, as she came in—the old janitor by the door, gesticulating to Annie where she sat writing at the big desk.

"But why should they be strikin' whin they can vote?" he was saying. "Will ye tell me that? If they want somethin' why don't they vote for ut, 'stid of layin' down their picks and shovels and sayin', we'll starve first? Eh?"

It was a glance of utter contempt that Annie threw at him.

"Do you think they make clothes with picks and shovels?" she inquired.

"They ain't men enough to wield a pick," retorted John. He turned to Nancy with an air of dignity.

"The great trouble is," he said, "that people is ignorant, Mrs. Carpenter. There's Mr. Edmunds, a fine successful man, and his father before him. But will these fellies listen to him? No! They hurro for this Dago Fechter—him that never drew over thirty dollars a week in his life! And is Socialist or out of his wits—I don't know which!"

Annie took up the cudgels at that.

"You'd hurro for him, too, if you'd worked where I did," she said fiercely. "Up in that loft, and old Blumenberg standing over you all day and half the night!"

"And where has it got ye?" Old John's voice rose like a distant siren. "In trouble! The paper this very night says, 'Two hundred deputy sheriffs sworn in, lookin' fer trouble.' What does that get ye?"

"What do you think it would get us," said Annie coldly, "when every one of 'em is old Edmunds' private detectives!"

"Would ye have 'em swearin' in two hundred bloody strikers?"

"Just as fair!"

"Mother o' God!"

It was always John's final word in any discussion, as he raised his hands. "Well, I'll be firin' up a little, Mrs. Carpenter, now—so the Doctor 'll be warm whin he comes in. It's a shame, him wastin' his time on such blaggards."

"Blaggards!"

That was his parting shot, as he went down the stairs. . . .

Well, it was all just a replica of each night's discussion, Nancy could not help thinking as she watched Annie gather up her papers and prepare to depart. They always said these same things night after night, when John brought in the papers and advised Annie to read them. They would go on say-

ing them after she had gone, no doubt. There would be no change—except that the name of her father would be used in the conversation. It was always conspicuously absent from the discussions when she was around now, probably because of a desire not to hurt her. But there could be no question of what Annie and Kerrigan Street thought of him. She had heard that herself in unprintable words out on the street corners of this tenement street. She herself would probably be included in the condemnation which was now his.

And that would be the only difference—after she had lived here three years. . . .

She stared out into the keen, icy brightness of the night at that, only half aware that a limousine was stopping by the Brotherhood entrance, until some familiar gesture suddenly registered itself upon her brain. It was Forrester Stone, she recognized then, with a catch of surprise. What had happened to bring him down here to-night?

She waited for him, staring into the coal fire that John had left, vividly conscious of the sound he made stamping the snow from his shoes in the corridor, exchanging a sentence or two with Vera Vassilof on duty out in the hall, and then coming down the hall toward the study. Somehow, she could wish he hadn't come.

"Kitty is coming to take me to the station, you know," she said as he entered. "Has anything happened?"

He looked around the study slowly before he answered, taking off his gloves:

"No," he said. "Only Harrigan reported that David had gone to the mass meeting, that's all."

"They can see you from the sidewalk," she said swiftly, as he took a step toward her.

"I'll pull down the shades," he said.

"What do you mean about David's going to the mass meeting?" she asked as he shut out the study from the curious gaze of homecoming Kerrigan Street.

"Oh, just more of this cursed strike," he returned.

But she put her hands behind her as he came to the fire, unmistakable intention in his eyes.

"Please, Forr," she said. "Not to-night! Just tell me what has happened?"

He stared at her an instant.

"Nothing, yet!" he answered. "Only it's incredible that David can be such a fool."

"Fool!" she repeated.

"Yes, as to take this milk thing to the mass meeting and then to Doctor Foster at the Second Presbyterian—a public meeting. After the committee decided here not to do it! Can't he take a hint? Does he think us such fools as to allow him to carry this thing to the public and still head this Brotherhood House, still keep his hold on this place—after he has joined the fight against us?"

He struck his hands together sharply.

"We're going to break this strike. We'll break David with it, if he makes us. Have I got to say that to him face to face to bring him to his senses?"

"I'm afraid you have," she told him, with a sudden odd coldness that she could not account for.

"Then I will," said he.

"But it won't have any effect," she told him at once. "You can't break David!" Something inside of her, indeed, seemed almost to force the words out! No, not anything Forrester could say to David face to face a thousand times over would ever have the least effect! David did not do things that way. . . .

"Can't break him!" There was almost scorn in Stone's voice.

"No."

"Why, I can take him like that!" Forrester had made a gesture with his hands as if he were tearing paper and throwing it away. "I own this Brotherhood House, stone, bricks, and mortar. I can throw him out of here to-night! Crush him like an egg-shell!"

"Not the real David," she said quietly. "You couldn't touch him if you threw him out of a hundred Brotherhood Houses! The position does not mean anything to him!"

"Don't tell me that! This is his game, his bluff, that's all! Champion of the Poor! Pah!"

"But you needn't shout!" There was distinct animosity in Nancy's low tone.

Stone saw it in the glitter in her eyes, too, in the way her strong little hands were clenched over the back of the chair where she stood.

It arrested him in the full tide of his irritation.

"Well, you and I needn't quarrel about it, at least," he said abruptly. "It's nothing in our lives what David chooses to do, I suppose."

"No, I suppose not," she answered in a low tone.

He stared at her an instant, his hands behind him.

"I couldn't stay away to-night, anyway. I know it isn't easy for you."

The fire faded out of her eyes.

"No, it isn't," she admitted. She sat down on the straight sofa by the fire looking into the flames. "It's like leaving a child, somehow. . . ." She unclasped her hands suddenly, and rose, standing by the big, dark wood table, "David should have had someone else—someone who would have had the courage to go into the street with him—and share a crust, if necessary." She looked down at her hands. "He only needed a wife like that to be a very fine sort of person—the kind I can never be. I can see that."

Her voice trailed off.

"I think I am hateful," she ended with a kind of sob.

"You can't help your emotions!"

"Then why was I given them?"

Just a glimpse in that tone of hers, too, of a soul intolerably oppressed—a glimpse that alarmed Forrester Stone.

"But you can't control love," he told her at once. "It would make no difference if you stayed in these four walls the rest of your life, so long as your heart and your love weren't here. That would only add dishonesty to unhappiness."

He went close to her, and put his arms about her gently.

"We've been over it all a thousand times, Nancy," he said. "Let's forget it and be happy—and you're tired. You've stood enough surely. Forget it all for two weeks."

"If I only could," she cried.

She buried her face in his shoulder at that, an irresistible impulse to tears sweeping over her. "If I only could," she repeated. . . .

It was the emotion of the moment, probably, that held them spellbound, unaware of the swift, light footsteps outside, as Kitty Sassoon came down the hall, pushed open the door, and stood an instant inside, her hand on the knob behind her, her lips parted and her eyes wide with the surprise of the scene before her. But neither Nancy nor Forrester noticed her until the door closed behind her with a click and she spoke:

"Nan—are you crazy?"

Like an electric shock that was, galvanizing Nancy into sudden action.

"Kitty," she said. She disengaged herself from Forrester, realizing the futility of explanation. "I didn't hear you!"

"Why, if I am *de trop*, of course, I'll go." There was a kind of iciness in Kitty's tone.

"Why, Kitty, don't be foolish!"

But Kitty Sassoon stood by the door without moving, still gazing at Nancy as if Forrester did not exist.

"I've suspected it all along," she said. The vivid colour of her cheeks seemed to have vanished completely, leaving her white-faced, black-eyed, tense. "Ever since Preck went away!"

"Preck!"

"Of course! Do you think I'm blind, Nan?" She came forward, stripping off her gloves. "Do you think you can carry on like this forever, without everybody knowing it—except David?"

"I had nothing to do with Preck Addams," Nancy said.

"Not in the last year—no!"

"Nor ever!" It was curious how the accusation stirred her! What was the idea of bringing up such a thing now? Wasn't it enough that her life lay divided, dying between Forrester and David?

"Nor with Forrester, I suppose," cried Kitty ironically.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you're a flirt, if Forrester only knew it!" There was no mistaking the hatred in Kitty's eyes now. "If he isn't taken in like the others always have been!"

"You needn't worry about me!" Forrester's voice was like a cool stream, quenching the strand of fire between the two women. "I know all about Nan."

"You think you do, you mean," cried Kitty.

"This isn't any flirtation, I tell you!" he said angrily.

It was his way of defending Nancy, of course. And yet the instant he had said it, he realized his mistake.

The way in which Kitty Sassoon turned and looked them over, one after the other, brought that home to him vividly.

"So that is the idea of New York!" she said. "You aren't satisfied with just flirting any more!" What a meaning she gave that sentence, too! Perhaps, indeed, if it had not been for the bitter truth of it, Nancy might have held on to her self-control as Forrester had. But she could not stand that. It roused all the antagonism she had ever had against untempted hypocritical virtue, against the scorn with which cruelty, deceit, and greed had always gazed upon passion.

"And what if I'm not!" she cried passionately. "What if I'm sick of the dullness and sordidness and ugliness!" She swept the vista of poverty that lay outside the Brotherhood windows. "What if I see all the colour and passion and romance of life die for me down here—where David doesn't even know when I come and go! Am I never to have any existence again?"

Like the drawing aside of a curtain, that speech was to Kitty, giving her a clear, complete view of what she had only glimpsed before. So this was no mere flirtation, as she had first thought, but incredible folly and passion, instead—folly that engulfed in a resistless wave all her hopes of securing Forrester Stone. He had not meant any of the things he had said to her! She had meant nothing in particular to him! He had taken her only when he could not get Nancy! The thing was true.

"Why, you are crazy, Nancy," she said, a trifle aghast. Such things as this seemed out of drawing, somehow, in Clewesbury. Things were conventional, regular in Clewesbury. . . .

"What if I am?" cried Nancy defiantly.

"What if you are?" The sudden realization of

it all flooded Kitty Sassoon, disposing of all hesitation, carrying on its crest an abrupt hatred for the man she had wanted and failed to get, and for this quondam friend of hers who had secured him—the hatred of spurned love. "What if you are?" she repeated. "It is for Forrester to answer that!"

"What do you mean by that, Kitty?" asked Forrester.

"I mean you are stealing another man's wife!" said Kitty implacably. "Behind his back!"

"I'm forcing Nan into nothing," Forrester replied angrily.

"But you are taking her just the same!"

"I'm the best judge of that, I think," said Nancy instantly.

"You!" A tone of utter contempt, it was, that Kitty used now. "Why, you are only gratifying your passions—as you always have."

"Kitty!" It was Forrester's sharp voice.

"Well, what else is she doing?" A thoroughly angered and jealous woman now, this Kitty Sassoon, her Titian hair outlining a chalk-white face. "Selling herself for New York, for pleasure——"

"When you say that, you lie, Kitty." There was deadly anger in Nancy's voice.

"You mean you don't like the truth!"

"You'll take that back——"

"You can't frighten me!"

"Kitty, Nan—stop it, I say! In God's name!"

Shot through with fear and dread, that sharp voice of Forrester Stone's was; the voice of a man who sees two women in deadly anger for the first time in existence. Why, the thing was like a nightmare, like some scene down on Bleecker Street where two Italian peasant women fought with knives! His voice, too, was like some policeman's shrill whistle, resounding down the empty street at midnight,

succeeded by the stillness and silence of the soft winter's night.

Nancy never forgot the piercing quiet of that instant. For she heard the stamping of shoes outside the street door on Kerrigan Street the next moment, and she knew it was David. She knew beyond any human doubt that it was he, even before he opened the door slowly, shaking the snow from his gray coat—how plainly the frayed collar showed in the light of the study!—long before he hung his muffler on the chair by the door and came forward slowly, unseeingly to the fire.

Unforgettable silence! Three figures turned to marble were those two women and the man who watched him, too. . . . David! It seemed almost as if none of them would ever have spoken again had not David broken the quiet as he stared absently into the flames, in his eyes that faraway look that never left him again.

"Well, for the first time in my life," he said, "I've seen the truth."

"What do you mean, Dave?" Nancy's voice was barely audible.

"My eyes have been opened."

"Your eyes?"

"Yes," he answered slowly. "I have heard the real truth about you, Stone—and me—and Nancy, and all of us."

"The truth?" Nancy forced herself to ask the question.

"The real truth! The everlasting truth." He turned suddenly from the fire and faced them. "I've been a fool, a blind fool, a mumbling fool! Serving out bottles of milk and dope like some charlatan, muttering, 'We all feel kindly here! Kindly toward each other! Kindly toward our brothers——'"

He broke off abruptly.

"What mockery! When these women and children on Kerrigan Street will starve to-morrow rather than accept even one last day's aid from this Brotherhood House."

"I don't understand." Forrester's voice was unsteady with the temporary relief, and the unavoidable catastrophe one false word would precipitate. "They've accepted it until now!"

"Because they believed me! Because they thought we stood for America here. Because they didn't know who owns the Brotherhood House, body and soul. But they know now. And they will starve rather than accept aid from us here, from our society, Congress Avenue, your society, Stone, Musson's church—what we call our America! Charity! When they want justice and only the chance God promised them simply to work! Work, a boon, a blessing for us, for you to grant them—sublime irony! No wonder they reject aid from a charity of smug bricks and mortar that every human being on earth with a spark of God left in him rejects as some vile disease because he knows, he feels unerringly, that it is false.

"I saw the reason to-night, in the smoke-filled hall —because the charity of Christ is not in feeding the starving; it lies in making it impossible for them ever to get so hungry. That is the charity that swells men's hearts, that finds response in shop and pulpit, because it rings true to the Brotherhood of man. It isn't that 'Gilded Restoration of Selfishness' which in the name of religion we call charity here——"

"Have you gone mad, Carpenter?"

"It does sting, doesn't it?" Fire in David's eyes now. "The meeting opened my eyes to the thing, the organized selfishness of our America, of capital, of labour, of everything, everybody—equality of opportunity to be selfish, the selfishness of the poor

glorified by talk of thrift, of the rich by admiration of success! A whole world organized to tear out true charity and love and unselfishness by the roots, and, by God, not succeeding because of humanity's innate decency! Because of humanity's intuitive perception that unselfishness is the only true road to happiness!

"Think of the picture of it! Humanity hoisted? by its own petard, but with the spirit of God fighting in it! Fighting in Fechter, and Nancy here, and you and me, Stone——"

"Did Fechter tell you this?" Abrupt fear in Forrester Stone, now, at the sudden revelation of power in the man before him. So this was the reason for that marriage of Nancy's! This, the hidden power! A bombast, a windbag, a preacher! He would have to stop this at once! "Did Fechter say this?" he demanded again.

But there was the force of a sudden vision of truth in David at the moment—and nothing could ever have stopped that.

"Fechter!" he repeated. "No! Fechter was more explicit. He accused me of selling my wife to you every day as the price of my silence and my position. Distributing charity, as he called it—for pay!"

"Dave!" It was almost a cry, that sound from Nancy.

"Just anger and desperation, Nan," he said swiftly. "He didn't see you, know you, as I do, of course—struggling against your emotions all your life. Coming down on Kerrigan Street, keeping faith with me through all the dun dreariness of this whole mistake of mine! He has only seen your little escapes from the emptiness of it, your endeavours to keep alive. He hasn't seen the unselfishness that has supported you through it all—that has made you keep faith with me and yourself——"

"Dave!"

It was just a trickle of blood that Nancy had seen on his wrist—but the sight struck into her heart like some knife, cutting the unbearable tension and self-accusation of the words of David. Oh, to do something, anything for him! And end this agony of accusation! "Are you hurt?"

"Nothing," he told her.

"But it is something!"

"I warded off the blow."

He would have dismissed it with that. But she could not stand the anguish of remorse another moment. Like a flash of gold, a glimpse of some wonder dream, those words of David's—bringing to her just one hint of the answer to existence, one gleam of hope that could light the solution to her own riddle of passion and unhappiness. Unselfishness! That was David's dream, his clue to happiness, his strength and his belief.

David, her David. . . .

How could any one destroy a belief like that!

"But let me dress the cut," she cried.

"I fixed it," he told her.

"But it needs more!"

"It's nothing, Nan!"

"But I want to fix it!" Forrester Stone and Kitty Sassoon might have been two mummies for all the part they appeared to play just then. Just herself and David—that was all the world to Nancy in that instant when she tore the strips from the sterilized package and bound his wrist swiftly.

Only the clock on the wall, indeed, sounding the hour of eleven, tore away the emotional mist of the moment for her—and let into the room the cold, harsh wind of fate, bringing back the present and the facts!

"It's time for the train."

She recognized Kitty's cold voice saying those words. But there was no answering relief in her heart at the prospect they brought up now.

"I'm not going anywhere!" she said scornfully.

"Not——" Stone began the sentence, but never finished it.

"No," she said. "I'm going to stay."

Yes, and stay forever! That was what her tone said.

A full minute Forrester Stone stared at her in the silence, indescribable emotion in his eyes.

"Well, as you choose," he said then slowly. "As you choose."

"I do choose," said Nancy.

And this time there was a break in her voice. . . .

CHAPTER XV

In Which Tragedy Comes to David

To the end of her life, Nancy never could forget the slow hours of that last night on Kerrigan Street, after she went upstairs to the living room and waited for the drama to play itself to a finish and give David back to her.

Like a vision of some new country, those moments in the study. Something in those few words of David's that had lit the landscape of emotion for her with a revealing flash, disposing instantly of the imps of passion. Unselfishness! To lose one's self in unselfishness, so that all passion and desire vanished in the tasks at hand—that was the answer to her riddle of life!

She saw it suddenly, forever, as she stared into the dying wood fire in the little Colonial living room. Well, she had known the moment David entered the study that she could never leave him. Like something that had grown up without her knowing it, gradually overshadowing everything she felt and yet never making itself known to her while she gazed at her own little drama of passionate conquest—that was what this new feeling for David was. It must have been in her all the time, only waiting its chance to show her its strength and everlasting character. He had had only to look at her from the dark wood table, with that dim, unseeing look in his blue eyes, and everything else in the world had vanished. Everything except the pathos and belief of

him, and his everlasting endeavour to do what was right!

That was what had caught at her throat—yes, and brought the tears to her eyes even here alone. If she could just hold him tight to her breast like some little child, and tell him how little it mattered that this Brotherhood House had failed; kiss away his disappointment and failure. And tell him she loved him!

David!

If only he could come soon so she could tell him that!

Utter self-contempt overwhelmed her as she buried her face in her hands at that thought. Why, she had not told him that in months and months. She had not told him anything. She had thought of nothing but herself—not of why this house was a failure, or of what he was doing. She had shut him out from her heart gradually, until he had gone on alone month after month and taken for granted the fact that she could not carry the burden, too.

And she had let him. She had cared only about herself and what was happening to her, from the beginning—from the very first moment at the Country Club dance. Her own feelings, her own pleasure, her own emotions! She had never considered his side of things. Just her own side of things! Just what she wanted! That had been her one thought, her guiding star, even when she had married him—to satisfy herself.

It had been the same with the imps of passion, too. Just an endeavour to satisfy her own emotions—that was all her moments with Forrester had been. She had not been able to resist him because she had wanted all the exquisite emotion of it regardless of who was hurt.

How had David believed in her through all that?

Believed in her so implicitly that his mere belief had become the cardinal fact of her existence, turning her in the end toward what he so passionately thought her, because she could not bear him to know otherwise? It gave her almost a shudder of agony to think how closely she had come to destroying that belief, and with it her own happiness forever. Like some rock of character, in a mist of emotion, the mere thought of him was—the one unchanging thing in a world of change. So long as she had him, she could still struggle her way to his ideals and happiness. . . .

Just the beginning of a new Nancy, her little, crouched figure was, indeed—there in the living room before the fire, in her soul the first dim glimpse of the eternal things of God. And yet even then Fate was preparing the blow for her—the bludgeoning that was to make her pay at last. I doubt, of course, if there was the slightest realization in her mind of the power of that passion she had awakened in Forrester Stone, or of the real character of the man. It did seem almost incredible that the scene in the study should have passed off without utter disaster overtaking them all, without Forrester making any fight for her of any kind. But it had. Why should anything happen now?

Like some dream the remembrance of David seemed, writing his resignation on the big desk in the corner and handing it to Forrester; and then bowing him and Kitty both out in silence. Like some graven image he had seemed, too, before the fire afterward while she had not dared to break the silence because of the look in his eyes and the shadow of disloyalty across her own heart. There had been almost a kind of sickness in her when she had thought of New York and the lengths to which she might have gone with Forrester. She had been able to think of nothing

else in the terribly few minutes that had elapsed before John Foster had called David on the telephone, and he had gone to still another midnight meeting in the editorial rooms of the *Press*.

Was it possible that she was going to escape the whole monstrous thing, after all, despite the undercurrent of dread and foreboding that had been in her ever since she had recognized the menace in those last words of Forrester's—"As you choose!"

That was the feeling that held her as the midnight hours dragged past, and she remained in ignorance of the resistless torrent of emotion that was sweeping on Forrester Stone to a final test of strength. It was a torrent that amazed even the man of destiny, an emotion which had held him in its grip ever since the moment in the Brotherhood study when Nancy had turned to David and he knew that he had lost.

Lost to the preacher, the windjamming fool!

The trembling anger of the man who has always won had surged through him at that, had swirled in his brain, for an instant, like a sandstorm in the desert, and then left him cold and determined—even grimly appreciative of the brains which had led him to depend not upon emotion alone but had left him still with one trump card. He had not lost yet. He had merely come to the last trick, if he could ever bring himself to play it.

And he could bring himself to-night!

He was telling himself that over and over again, at that instant, as he directed the chauffeur to the distant house in East Clewesbury and sat back in the limousine watching the winter streets flash by. Nancy could call it brutal if she liked—even a betrayal of confidence. But it was the only thing that would ever free her. It justified itself there. To-night's scene was only the result of her interminable procrastination, her desire to have everything and

give up nothing, her refusal to face her own affairs. There was a limit to a person's right to do that. And to-night was the end. . . .

All hesitation vanished as he went through the carved desk in the library of the villa, assembling the little violet-scented missives he sought, and putting them into small piles. In some odd way, they seemed to bring some elusive part of Nancy's own personality into the room, conjuring up a vision of what it would mean to own her completely. Well, the risk would be worth getting her in the end! What doubt could there be in any one's mind, either, after these letters had been glimpsed?

The only point was to act quickly, before anything happened!

The sound of the telephone bell out in the panelled hall caught his ear just then, as he tied up the last of the little packets. And he hesitated an instant. Who could that be? It wasn't credible it was Nancy, changing her mind. Not to-night. It might be Van Wyck, of course—or the Washington call. Lewisohn might possibly call him instead of Van Wyck if he was in a tight place getting the uniform contracts and wanted advice. He would have to answer it. By God, couldn't a man ever escape business?

It was Van Wyck, he recognized an instant later.

"The whole thing is settled." The old man sounded almost exultant over the wire. "Lewisohn just called. He got the whole thing. Contracts for O. D. on our figures, and sliding scale for costs and labour. Cost-plus, arrangement. Provided we can deliver in thirty, sixty, and ninety days. We can let this strike kiss itself good-bye until the war is over, now!"

"We'll have them in the dirt in a week." Stone hesitated.

"Can't help it." Van Wyck's usual succintness had replaced his temporary exultation. "We'll follow our last week's decision. Close the strike to-morrow —union question left open, wages what they demand—then put our liberality in the morning editions. Get Fechter and his gang out of their beds if necessary and come to an agreement to-night. On patriotic grounds, order of the Government! You know."

"Yes, I know," retorted Stone. The old man was like a parrot, telling him all these things. Had he forgotten who said them originally?

"Well," Van Wyck gave a short laugh over the telephone, "I wanted to be sure we were in complete agreement as to what we do and how we say it. Make the final meeting for ten o'clock in my office to-morrow morning."

"Ten o'clock."

"The only important thing is that the agreement will cover only the period of the war."

"Right."

In the dimly lit, panelled hall, Forrester Stone took out his watch as he closed off the telephone, and looked at it with odd, nervous irritation. Eleven forty now! And Carpenter had only that meeting at the *Press*, so Harrington had reported. That did not give him time to waste! Anyway, what was the hurry? Fechter and his gang could wait until he was through at the Brotherhood House—and Matson could write up the announcements and the press reports for the papers. An hour couldn't make any difference to this strike. But his whole chance of winning Nancy might fade if he was too late reaching Carpenter to-night. The whole world could change for her once Carpenter knew this strike was over.

"Kerrigan Street," he said to the chauffeur, ten minutes later. "The Brotherhood House."

Why, the losing or winning of this strike had meant nothing in comparison to this struggle for Nancy, he realized as the motor gathered speed. She had become his real goal. Of course, he would finish this first. . . . The only question was, would he be able to reach the Brotherhood House before Carpenter got back? Would he be able to intercept him before he saw Nancy again?

There was no conception in David's mind just then, however, of any drama playing itself out to a finish while he remained in ignorance. As he sat at the desk in the study, gazing with unseeing eyes at the books before him, there was only a sudden, stunning view of the insoluble problem of existence, of the relentless tearing away of the veil of illusion.

Yes, a world of organized selfishness, and in the throes of deathly sickness because of it. But what should a man do about it? That was the question. This Brotherhood House experience had shown the futility of one kind of endeavour. Fechter's fierce remark to-night: "Yes, you don't risk anything!" had brought that home to him. No, he had not risked anything because he had had Nancy to consider, and what would become of her if he fed these children of Kerrigan Street with his own money. A week or two, perhaps; and then his resources would be exhausted—and he would be face downward in the mud, with Nancy beside him. No, he had not done that because it was impractical to be wholly unselfish, because the penalty of sheer unselfishness was ruin—ruin for one's self and one's family.

There were no clear armies of good or evil in life, such as faced each other in Flanders and France! Only an intolerable confusion, a rabble of humanity, each man's uniform coloured only by the motive behind. To discover an answer to it was like trying

to find some pattern in a crazy quilt shot through with strands of unselfishness and knots of greed, and shimmering in a changing light, even the knots untying and the strands becoming tangled. It was not any such clear design as Fechter would have him believe or Forrester Stone would insist. Not even the war itself was that. The war showed unselfishness going to battle, and yet striving itself selfishly for this place and that—for commissions, exemption, promotion, power. The crazy quilt blown for the moment by a gale of unselfish emotion! That was the war . . . with pure unselfishness in the front trenches, shot in the head, and face downward in the mud. . . .

Clewesbury and life were just the same, too, only with the gale left out.

Before God, what a mess!

That unselfishness should always have to give its life, if it remained true to itself! What irony there was in that. When one considered, too, that selfishness meant only unhappiness, personal unhappiness, from beginning to end, and most of all to its possessor! Like Van Wyck, sitting alone in the Morpeth Terrace library, pursuing selfish power, and getting only loneliness and cynicism for reward. That was civilization: organized selfishness leading its victims to certain unhappiness while the world turned its back on the terrible irony of the whole thing, and called it economic laws and the rise and fall of wages and the working out of destiny! When, in reality, the whole thing was the result of the acts of men, one man at a time, from the day the first stick turned up the ground or the first kernel of wheat was cast in the silt of the Mesopotamian streams.

What a jest the thing made of any such place as this Brotherhood House, or he himself trying to show to Kerrigan Street an America which Congress Ave-

nue did not see! Fechter, too, teaching his workers to own an industry they could never possess—and if they did, destined for the same crypt of selfishness once power was theirs. Stone, prating of the great industrial future, starving and beating men with thongs the better to give libraries and hospitals to their sons, so that the spirit of man would improve! And on the great world stage, democracy thrashing autocracy only to tread the same path!

Just chaos and change, chaos and change, shot through with selfishness, with never anything everlasting, never anything to hang to, except the little rafts men and women made out of love and loyalty and faith. That was really life. All else was illusion—like the lawns and houses and society of Fitzhugh Street which he had thought so changeless and indestructible in childhood, and even now saw were doomed to vanish. . . .

How could a man chart a course in a world like that?

How know his enemy, how hold to his course of unselfishness and true happiness once he had found it?

In the silence of the study the picture of the Base Hospital unit marching down Cuyahoga Avenue came to him, and sudden emotion shot through him. Well, a man could go to war, perhaps. If he cared to let these children go to the devil, and his wife shift for herself. The war was clear enough. Before God, why was it that he could never do what other men did? That he seemed always cursed with endless doubts and wondering about right and justice! That he was always bound by some consideration such as these children!

He rose and stood by the fire, filling his pipe a little blindly, fierce desire in his heart. Just to be one of the crowd, for once—one of the crowd that went to

the ball game afternoons, that played pool in the Lotos Club, that played poker nights at Jacks, that crowded every camp in America just now, that was beginning to stream through the streets of Liverpool and Brest and Bordeaux and St. Nazaire.

Just one of the crowd. . . .

He scarcely heard the footsteps on the icy sidewalk outside, nor realized that someone had opened the door, he was so sunk in that thought, until he looked up abruptly, and saw Forrester Stone.

He hardly welcomed him, either. Behind him now was Forrester and this Brotherhood House. There was no use talking now. Probably a sort of regret in Forrester because of the split—a lingering feeling that after all he was of Congress Avenue and not Kerrigan Street and so was human—and Nancy's husband. Forrester probably bore him no personal ill will, any more than he did to Forrester. But what good could mere words do?

"Hello, Stone," he said. "What are you doing down here again?"

It was rather odd that the man should have come down here again.

"Why, I've brought you some documents to read," Forrester said. He fumbled in his inside pocket and threw the oblong, violet-scented packet upon the dark wood table between them.

They were letters, David saw as he picked them up —letters in Nancy's handwriting. No one could mistake that capricious hand, with its deep lines and hurried scrawls!

"Why, what is the idea?" he asked curiously.

"They are letters Nancy has been writing to me," Stone answered. His dark eyes seemed sunk in his cheeks but he held himself well in hand. "It struck me to-night that the thing for me to do was to bring them to you."

"Oh, I see," said David, although he did not see. All that was perfectly plain, indeed, was that Forrester Stone appeared to be labouring under some high tension, some tremendous nervousness. What had Nancy gotten into with him that called for letters, and a visit, and such an odd demeanour? Had she been speculating, doing some of the queer things women did? She had gone to a fortune teller once, and not told him for weeks because the woman had predicted bad luck. . . . "Why, what has she been corresponding about?" he asked.

"Read the letters," said Stone.

He sounded brusque, almost harsh, as if he were at the end of his patience, for some reason or other. His tone gave to David his first pang of doubt. There was something here out of the ordinary—something he did not understand, something sinister. He felt that even before he took up the packet and his eyes fell on the writing and an odd stillness came into his heart. And then a little cold chill swept through him. What kind of letters were these about enthrallment and rapture and conscience? From Nancy to Stone! Not in a garden, pursuing innocent conquest——

"What in the devil have you been doing to Nancy?" he asked.

Like some nightmare, the thing seemed of a sudden —filled with all the past in sickening disarray.

"I've been doing nothing," Stone told him angrily. "She has fallen in love with me. Can I help that?"

In love with him! Momentarily, David felt stunned. And then in the silence, he almost laughed. Why, the man was mad—or he didn't know Nancy and her ways! Had she been unable to resist making a conquest, and vanity had interpreted it thus to this man?

"In love with you?" he repeated.

But Stone seemed moved to sudden action now.

"As God is my witness, I didn't bring this thing on," he said as he stepped swiftly forward to the table. "I don't think Nancy knew what she was doing, what she wanted, either—until it happened! We've tried to end it, tried to forget it, kill it—but you can't end such things. They go on."

He stopped suddenly, aware of the curious expression on David's face and then he went on:

"She was going to New York to-night—and end the damn thing that way. Until this Brotherhood row came up. And she couldn't tell you."

In the silence, a sudden conviction of utter unreality seized David again. Why, this was nonsense, it was incredible. It was the nightmare once more.

"What do you mean by end it all?" he inquired. There was directness in his gaze.

"She wasn't coming back."

"Oh," said David. He nodded his head slowly, the way old men sometimes do over an expected piece of news. "And you?"

The question seemed to snap Stone's patience suddenly—broke his nerve, perhaps, under the strain of that direct gaze of David's.

"I? Good God, what do you think? Oh, you can think what you like!" he rasped out abruptly. "But there comes a moment when marriage isn't a barrier. I've seen her go through this thing as long as I can. One mistake shouldn't ruin her life. Drudgery and dirt, squalor and neglect! Instead of the happiness and things she has a right to—always had before she married you. You've thought you were doing the Patron Saint act down here. But she's the one who has done the sacrificing, paid for the fun—the way the woman always does. What kind of a life can she ever lead with you? By God, and you knew the

kind of woman she was when you married her! Made for Fifth Avenue and Regent Street—not this damned hole. But you'd let her go on to the end rather than look the thing in the face. You'd keep her until she was fifty and worn out. I've seen it for two years. I've come to the end of my rope on it, too. I can't see you take her from here out into some other gutter—not when I can stop it! That's why I brought you the letters—to see what decency you had in you!"

"What do you mean by that?"

It was a simple question but there was a tone in its utterance that gave Forrester Stone a sudden glimpse of deadly peril, that brought to him abrupt realization of his folly, his headstrong folly. Only disaster could result from angering David Carpenter! He was heading for shipwreck with every word of this quarrel. A gross mistake in tactics, brought on by his confounded nerves. All that had saved him so far, perhaps, had been the stunning surprise of the thing to Carpenter.

"I mean when I can come to you and lay all the cards on the table!" he countered. "When the thing is honest and fair between us, and you understand it. When there is no more of this damnable falsehood and deceit. Do you see?"

Did he see?

Ah, what a silence that was! One, two, three—the minutes ticked themselves off while Stone waited by the table, and the fire fell with a little crash, and somewhere outside snow rumbled like a tiny avalanche from a near-by roof. And then David filled his pipe slowly, and the muscles under his coat relaxed as he stared at Stone in the bare study.

No, he didn't see. The thing could not be true. He would have known it. Nancy could never have kept anything real from him like this. It must be

just some flirtation into which her youth had led her, a return, perhaps, of that youthful desire for conquest which had made Preck call her the fair barbarian in those days of their courtship. And Stone had taken her seriously, to the point of this visit. Just a child of impulse, that was all she was. That was all her letters would prove her to be, too. A passionate child in the clutches of this hound. . . .

"I do not know what the letters contain, you see," he pointed out in an oddly quiet voice. The letters must not leave the room, in any case. Why, in God's name, did people always write letters? This man would have nothing to show any one if he left these letters. That might be the object of this visit, too.

"Then read them," said Stone harshly. "They're plain enough."

It was a curiously deliberate gesture with which David gathered up the packet.

"I will, when I am alone," he said.

"Meaning that you don't believe me?" exclaimed Stone.

"If I may be allowed a belief in my wife," replied David.

For a moment the blind faith of the man almost staggered Stone. And then he realized the futility of all words. The letters spoke louder than anything he could ever say, and in a voice the man could not deny. Nothing could change the result now. Why was it not the part of common sense to call the game over now and let the man face Nancy and give her her freedom. That was what any man did with an unwilling wife. Particularly a Don Quixote Carpenter!

Why did he not leave him to the bitter truth?

"As you like," he said slowly. "I've done my part in telling you, anyhow."

"You've done that," agreed David ironically.

"I'll be going."

"Before I throw you out," remarked David.

Just an instant Forrester Stone considered that. And then he turned on his heel and shrugged his shoulders and went out, banging the door behind him. . . .

What was the use of a fight! That was only cheap theatricalism!

He never knew by what mighty effort of will David was able to keep his hands off him as he put on his hat and went out. A kind of blur it was that the effort sent before David's eyes, as he stood by the big dark wood table, fingering the packet of violet-scented missives, in his heart an odd conviction of unreality, of having glimpsed some scene in some other person's life. And then the blur faded and his eyes fell on the little square missives, and the sinister strangeness of the whole thing assailed him with irresistible violence.

There was no lack of reality about these letters, certainly. They were plain enough.

He leaned down and picked up the packet again slowly.

Just how plain were they?

In the silence he took off the rubber band and laid them out upon the table before him, a kind of dim, unvoiced hope in his heart. Yes, she might have been foolish. Nancy was such an impulsive person. But she was not base.

Twenty-three of them there were, he saw as he spread them out. Before God, why had she never told him? The whole thing seemed impossible, looked at in that way.

Little ghosts from the past crowded about his chair as he sat down and opened the first one—little ghosts of this favourite expression, of that whimsical phrase. When had she first asked him to forgive her? When

entered the Land of Little Quarrels? And encountered the Mountains of Resolution?

They whispered in David's ears, those little ghosts, as he read that first letter and then the second, conjuring up for him poignant pictures of the dim garden on Morpeth Terrace, half-forgotten moments in the Chinese Pagoda, instants in the dark of the Alhambra. But they fell silent at the third, half afraid of the slow, mounting stillness in his heart as he read on; took tiny backward steps as he reached for the rest of the packet, and fled headlong at last as fear took the place of belief and chill anguish stabbed him to the heart.

Before God, no woman, Nancy or another, wrote such letters without the intimacy of passion! There had been no exaggeration here. This Stone must have owned her completely, as if she were no wife of his—as if he had never existed!

In the silence of the study, blindness struck his eyes for a second. What a figure of irony it made of him! Trying to reform Clewesbury and not even able to see his wife as she was! A silly damn fool meddling in things he did not understand and calling it democracy or something. Bitter truth in those remarks of Stone's, in those warnings of Preck's! No, he was no good to any one—never had been since the day he left Fitzhugh Street and his own kind. No wonder Nancy had found excitement elsewhere when he had preferred Fechter and Kerrigan Street to her society! Not a mention of him or this Brotherhood House in all these letters, from beginning to end. This was what Nancy had been thinking about while he had thought the world was coming to an end because some strikers in the slums were not getting a square deal—while he had been trying to represent an America which didn't exist.

Selfishness. That was what it had been on his

part. Selfishness to the two old women in the house of steep stairs, selfishness to Nancy and all the passion and temptation of her. Satisfying his own desires to do something fine, to be something out of the ordinary in the world, instead of staying where he belonged and doing his best for Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan, for Nancy and her little happinesses! Gazing at the stars while Nancy died under his feet.

What a record of failure. . . .

And the children of Kerrigan Street starving in the end, just the same. . . .

A long time David sat there, while the room grew colder and colder, and outside the silence of the late winter's night grew intense, unbroken, almost palpable. And then he rose at last and swept the letters into a little heap upon the table, and went to the big desk where the night light still burned.

Well, just an incident in Nancy's life—that was what he really had been from the beginning, he thought a little blindly. She had taken lightly what was everything to him and then had cast it aside once she had had her desire. A little barbarian! Just as Preck had said in the beginning. And yet she was not to blame. She was made that way. It was what she had feared from the beginning, although they had laughed about her not "lasting." She had probably never really loved him. She had taken him because she could have passion no other way—and passion was her world.

There had been no armour of real love about her, deflecting temptation. The first gust of passion had swept her away. She had always shone with vivacious brightness for every man. And she had shone a little too brightly for Stone. That was all. No one could resist her if she wanted him. And she had never told him because she had come to have affection for him. She had not been able to hurt him,

after all their intimacies together, after all the sweep of Morpeth Terrace and the Chinese Pagoda and Fitzhugh Street and Chicago—and the days in the apartment upstairs. That was why she had never told him.

A child of tragedy, that was what she was.

What in God's name would ever become of her?

A little tide of passionate hatred of Stone rose in his heart at that. What did this Forrester Stone propose to do for her—just how far was he honest?

The tide subsided slowly. Well, that was Stone's affair, not his. His opinion was not wanted. An overwhelming desire to be released—that was what those letters spelled. What should he do about that? What could he do about it until this new campaign for the children was started and he controlled his own actions?

Time vanished in the contemplation of that.

He did not hear the clock strike four and then five that dark winter morning, with the night lamp still burning brightly on the desk beside him. The first sound that roused him was old John shuffling the snow from his feet outside, and then opening the door that led into the study—old John coming to shake down the fires. And he knew it must be morning.

"It's up early ye are, Doctor," the old man said. "Or is ut late?" He held out to him the morning paper, still stiff with the cold. "I suppose it's yourself had a hand in this news! Did ye make them come to reason?"

"Not I, John," he answered. What did he mean by the news, indeed?

He saw the headlines an instant later, however, and knew at once what he meant. "Strike Settled! Employers Do Patriotic Thing!"

Strike settled! So that was the news. By the

light of the night lamp he stared at the paper curiously, unable to comprehend the event for a moment, an odd lifelessness in his eyes. And then he read the account of the meeting through to the finish.

A full half hour it seemed to take him to finish the two single columns and understand the thing fully. And then he sat quite still, his eyes fixed on the graying tenements outside—ten, twenty, thirty minutes. When he rose at last, it was to lay down the paper and draw himself up to the desk. Twenty minutes later he rose from that, unsnapping two keys from his key-ring and wrapping them in the note he had written, and putting the whole thing in an envelope. "For Nancy" he wrote on it.

An instant he stood by the desk, before he walked over to the door that led to the stairs. He stood a moment there, then, listening, his hand on the knob, holding the door slightly ajar, his big frame curiously limp against the door jamb. And then he closed the door softly and came back to the table, laid the letter slowly by the inkwells, put on his coat and hat quite carefully, stood by the street door an instant, opened it and went out. By the time old John emerged from the head of the stairs, he was only a distant, graying figure, vanishing in the mist down Kerrigan Street.

CHAPTER XVI

Wherein the Truth Comes to Nancy only to Have Her Realize It too Late

It was just an hour later that Nancy stole down the stairs, espied the letter by the inkwells on the dark wood table, and an instant afterward fled back up to the apartment with the note in her hand. It said, as she opened it in bed:

Dear Nan:

I've been reading your letters to Stone and see the thing quite clearly. These two keys are for the safe deposit box at the Lincoln and the desk upstairs. You'll find what bonds you need at the Lincoln, and that signed blank check on the Traders Bank is in the desk. Keep these things for yourself under all circumstances. I won't write to you. You can call it desertion. It means little, and I think satisfies the law of the state. Give all your affairs to Judge Addams. The old man is your friend. Forgive me for not seeing you. I could not.

Dave.

And that was all. . . .

But it was enough for Nancy. In the loneliness and bitterness of that hour in the bedroom she realized that she had brought her own fate upon herself, and was but justly rewarded. She saw that clearly as she rose unsteadily and sat on the edge of the bed, little, tense lines marking her white face with shadows. Yes, this was what faithlessness and disloyalty deserved. This was what a man of Forrester's kind would do, too. She might have known that, after all her years on Morpeth Terrace, after

all her contact with that ruthless point of view that ruled men like her father and Forrester. He had been thinking only of how to get rid of David forever and secure her for himself.

In the silence of the bedroom suddenly she laughed, a laugh that ended in a queer, dry sob.

Get rid of David! When she herself had just discovered him, when her world had just resolved itself to him alone, when she wanted only David. What irony there was in that! What a dagger in the soul, the bitter regret and reproach of that was. . . .

Like some slow awakening from a stupefying blow, the rest of that day always seemed to her afterward, bringing home to her all she had lost, and giving her a totally new and heartbreaking view of David. The queer quiet in the apartment; the surprised look in Doctor Dunstan's face; the impassive expression of the steward at the Lotos Club; the silence in the old-fashioned parlour on Fitzhugh Street. They were all like vivid milestones on a desolate road to tragic comprehension, as she sought to find out where David had gone and found only that she had lost him.

It was that necessity of finding him that roused her first, and set her feverishly to dressing in the little bedroom. She could not believe that this was the end of everything for them. It was not possible that David could really mean that everything was over between them—that he could actually have disappeared. People did not do such things. He must be still in Clewesbury somewhere.

That was the hope that stirred in her heart as she refused to face separation, and dressed hurriedly and went out for the car.

She knew she was too late, however, as she stood in the parlour on Fitzhugh Street a half hour later and Aunt Susan told her he had caught an eight-

fifty train for some place—Washington, she thought. If not for there, for Chicago.

"Oh," she said then. And she knew that he had really gone. . . .

Just a little, crumpled-up heap of a girl she was for an instant, trembling by the sofa, before she straightened up and turned away. But she would have died rather than have given away her secret just then. Aunt Susan was kinder than Aunt Hat. But there was no real welcome for her in this house.

"Thanks," she said with a curious look of steadiness in her gray eyes. "I only hoped I would catch him."

So David had kept it to himself, she told herself a little tremulously as she started the car in the icy street outside. He had not even mentioned it to his aunts. Well, she could do the same, she could tread her path.

It was not until she sat alone again in the apartment, however, with the Pirate Cat staring at her in hopes of luncheon, that she realized just what that would mean to her. She took out the two keys David had left her and opened the high, old-fashioned desk then in a desperate little endeavour to do something so she would not lose her control.

Yes, here was the check, just where he had put it that night the young doctor down on Allen Street had been struck by a street car and had died in an hour. In case of accident, he had said, with his slow smile, as he locked up the little drawer. And this was the accident. But was there nothing else? Was this all the clue she was going to have?

She started to close the desk, then, mechanically, until the words "Lotos Club" on an envelope attracted her attention. She never knew just why she picked up that envelope, either. But she never forgot that she did so. An open envelope it was, and it rustled

as she picked it up, and something fell out on the desk. A white feather it was, she saw. And on the notepaper inside was written: "With Our Compliments, December Twenty-fifth, The Lotos Club."

A full ten minutes, in the silent apartment, she stared at that white feather, while she realized that he had never told her, and then a great lump came into her throat. . . .

The envelope said: "Dr. David Carpenter."

It was the beginning of her new view of David. And yet it was just a glimpse that she had of him playing his part on Kerrigan Street in silence, while she sought her own desires—and then the plain suggestion of the thing shut out the past with abrupt conviction. Why, this was where he had gone—to Washington! There had been no reason any longer why he should stay because of her—or because of these children of Kerrigan Street. The strike was over. How stupid she had been not to guess that immediately! He had sought out Preck at once, to get into the medical corps. . . .

She rose abruptly at the conclusion and sought the bedroom and her bag and trunk. Well, she would seek him, too, as soon as she could pack and catch a train—before the telephone could ring and Forrester's voice sound in her ears. She would never give herself to Forrester Stone now—not if she never saw David again. Like a dead weed in yesterday's garden, that passion for him was, killed by the frost of the winter. He was hateful—all the arrogance and selfishness and ruthless power of him. The opposite of David, forever. She would never see him again, even if David refused her, even if she never knew love again.

It was just twenty-four hours later that she stood in the bleak, square reception room of the Military

Intelligence in Washington, staring out of the window, waiting for Preck to answer the little slip the messenger had taken, in her mind the first ineffaceable impression of the swirling thousands of war-workers—clerks, stenographers, officers, sailors, business men, relief workers—who crowded the streets and parks and buildings from the capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and swelled the city by the Potomac to bursting. Why, Clewesbury seemed vanished overnight here—Kerrigan Street and Congress Avenue a dream. How curious that there wasn't more stir in Clewesbury!

She forgot that thought almost immediately, however, at the sight of Preck's familiar figure coming down the hall, clad now in trim khaki.

"Why, what on earth brings you here, Nan?" he said, as he took both her hands. "Tickled to death to see you!"

She felt foolish at that for an instant—and then restrained an odd desire to weep. No, she couldn't conceal this thing from Preck—not even if he had not seen David. She would have to tell somebody.

"Have you seen David?" she asked tremulously.

"No," he exclaimed. "Is he in Washington?"

"Yes," she said.

"Fine!" Preck cried. "The old dodo has waked up, finally! What is he doing?"

She looked at him for a barely perceptible instant.

"I'll tell you at lunch," she said.

"Splendid!" he accepted. . . .

It was a decidedly perturbed Captain Addams, however, who stared at her in the crowded Occidental grill an hour later, once the story was over. Little Nancy Van Wyck in a mess of this kind! And with Forrester Stone, of all men! So it had happened just as he had thought it would. Fate had merely picked Forrester Stone—not himself. That was his

thought as he told her that. David might have gone anywhere, be anywhere. It would take weeks to locate a man in so many thousand places, with all the records in such incomplete state and with millions of men on the move.

"But he'll write somebody, of course," he finished.

"He won't write me," she told him.

"Well, then," he decided, "his aunts. And meantime, we'll depend on the Surgeon General's office. I'll send through a request, and keep them at it. I don't think Dave would do anything—foolish, do you?"

"No." She shook her head.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I hope not."

"I'm sure he won't," Preck reassured her. "It's just a little mess that will be straightened out in a jiffy. If I were you, I'd go home until we locate him."

"But I'm not going back," she said with an odd shadow in her eyes.

For a moment a little cloud crossed Preck's face. Not going back! Well, there was nothing he would not want to do for David's wife, of course. But things were a little different in Washington from Clewesbury. Nancy had not seen little Betty Patterson. He could not spend very much time taking Nan around; not under the circumstances. There was little apparent diminution in her charm, either—in that passionate attraction she had for a man. But it would be better to stick to Betty. This was a mess where conventions and morals were concerned. And Stone had been stung good and hard. . . .

"You can stay for a while, of course," he agreed. "But you'll find it not much like Clewesbury. There isn't a soul in this town who hasn't got a war job of some kind and isn't working top speed at it!"

"Then I'll get a war job, too," Nancy told him.

That was exactly what she would do, she told herself an hour later, as she lay on the bed in her room at the Willard, loneliness in her heart. She would have to do something like that if she were ever going to keep her mind off herself. And she could not see herself back in Clewesbury, meeting Kitty, enduring the gossip of the Babies' Aid Society and the French Relief and the Red Cross workrooms. They would all guess at once.

She could never keep the catastrophe secret in Clewesbury if David did not write to her. It would be an impossibility if the thing dragged on month after month and she did not know what had become of him and all the other girls began to get letters from France. She could not go on living in the Brotherhood House apartment either unless she saw Forrester and accepted it from him. And that would be suicide for both herself and David. There would be nothing to show that he had not been right in his belief then. And above all it would involve the necessity of seeing Forrester, of having to fight once more against his passionate persistence. He might not know what had become of her or David this way. She could get Preck to write and have the storage company pack up the furniture and take it away. And she need never let Forrester know where she was. She could get a room in some house in Washington and get a war job until Preck found out where David had gone. . . .

It was not until night had come, however, and she had refused Preck's invitation and had had dinner by herself in a corner of the Willard dining room, that she saw how difficult it was going to be to lose herself completely. She had not sent a line to Rhea Winters, for one thing. She could not vanish completely so far as the Morpeth Terrace house was

concerned, either. Even if her father did not care, it would look very strange if no one in Clewesbury knew what had become of her or David.

She cut that Gordian knot about midnight, however. And wrote two lies—one to New York and the other to Clewesbury. David had decided to enter the army, she informed her correspondents, and they were in Washington on the way South where she would take some kind of position to be near him until he sailed for the other side.

That severed her quite completely she told herself as she posted the letters by the elevators.

Clearer comprehension of her course and all it involved came to her two days later as she had lunch with Preck again. No, the Surgeon General's office had no record of any David Carpenter, he told her—though, of course, it would take some time to get any real information. It might be a matter of months. Couldn't the Red Cross do anything for her?

She smiled a little at that.

"Why, I'm down there as a nurses' aid, already," she told him, "without any husband in the army—merely working until they can send me across!"

Preck's jaw dropped a little.

"You mean——" he began.

"Why, certainly," she admitted. "David's going across sometime. If I want to follow him, I better go first!"

"That's Irish," Preck commented. Just a tiny gleam of admiration in his eyes, however. She had certainly changed since he knew her! She must be sincere, too, about her faithfulness to Dave.

"But it's practical," she pointed out. "I think that old Surgeon General is asleep. He may never wake up in time for me."

"You can't tell anything about it," Preck admitted. "I think myself it's a matter of months."

A matter of months!

She turned that over in her mind as she took her way back to the marble building on Seventeenth Street, and later as she walked up Sixteenth Street in the winter dusk to the room she had taken on Rhode Island Avenue. So she might have to spend months in this city where no one knew her, where the shining automobiles were filled with strangers, where the drawing-room curtains veiled mystery, and the name Van Wyck meant nothing.

Her heart failed her a little as she sat on the bed in the big front room, and contemplated the prospect. She wasn't made for difficulties like this, for loneliness and unhappiness——

She stopped abruptly at that. Well, perhaps she was made for them as much as anybody was made for them. Perhaps loneliness and unhappiness were just as hard for other people to bear—only they had character and she didn't. They had will and unselfishness and character! Where she had only selfishness and weakness and emotion! They tried, and she didn't. That was the only difference. And she had made all her own unhappiness because of it—and David's, too.

Why, she never had given anything but unhappiness, she saw suddenly. To her father or David or Forrester Stone. She had kicked away everything life had given her, instead of thinking of others, doing something for others the way David did, the way thousands of daughters and wives were doing, and always had done. She had never tried real unselfishness. She was not even trying it now. Just using Preck and everything that came her way to attain her own ends, to assuage the pain in her heart, to bring back David to her, but without any

thought of real unselfishness. That was what she was doing. And always had done.

To take life as it came, and say a kind word—and leave smartness to others; to love unselfishly and completely—and leave flirtation to others; to lose one's own desires in the thing achieved—and leave fame and ambition to others . . . that was David's way, and it was happiness.

Would not the Christ of the kind eyes and the great heart help her to do that?

In the cold darkness of the Rhode Island Avenue room sudden conviction came to her. Of course he would. Who could read those flaming words of his spoken long ago and doubt it?

That was the winter of unselfishness—and little coal!—in Washington, but I doubt if among all the thousands who thronged unaccustomed places there were any more devoted than Nancy. Just filing pictures—that was all she did. But were ever pictures filed so devotedly before or since! Or identified and labelled and sorted so carefully! No chance for "French peasants from Noyon" to get confused with "Refugees at Aix-les-Bains" so long as she handled the endless packages of prints from Paris! She realized a little, after the first month, perhaps, how doubtfully her patriotism had been forced upon her, and so laboured all the harder to make up for that.

Long after nine, it was, many nights in February before she left the brightly lighted room in the building and came out upon the soft lights and frosty walks of the Mall to seek supper in the dining room of the Lafayette. And then back sometimes until midnight, when a particularly mixed-up assortment arrived and the requests came thick and fast. No, she would not bother Preck, she would stand upon her own feet. Perhaps if she could work all her

waking hours the little devils of loneliness would not have such fearful power.

She never gave up hope of hearing from David. No, there might be a letter from him any evening when she came up the steps of the Rhode Island Avenue house and looked over the mail upon the high hall stand—or if not then, there might be one in the morning when she came down. Surely Aunt Susan must hear soon, and forward the letter. What was he doing that he did not write to his aunts?

She marvelled a little at first, of course, at the world she found herself in—at the endless industry of the giant improvised organizations that crowded and overflowed building after building, spread out along street after street—organizations filled with endless thousands of men and women in and out of uniform who jammed the cars and sidewalks and restaurants and theatres. But it was not long before she ceased to wonder at that, and took it all for granted. All those thousands were filled, too, with a kind of vision of unselfishness. That was why their faces were so eager and their tasks so touched with the spirit of happiness even though the world was at war and death stared out from every newspaper's headlines.

How had she ever missed the plain truth of it before?

She bore up quite bravely, indeed, until spring came, and the grass grew greener in the park by the Potomac, and the magnolias on the White House lawn shook out their snowy clusters, and in the sun-bathed squares and circles children played again. A kind of rebirth of desire, of impulsive recklessness, that seemed to bring to her, with its reminder that still another spring had come—another spring on the road to eternal autumn. Was she ever going to hear from David?

That doubt bore upon her quite heavily as the spring ripened swiftly into summer, and she watched the world about her taking life as it came. Preck and little Miss Patterson, for instance, seemed to be living only for the present, as were Major Lawrence and the young lieutenant who had the room next to hers and practised bad French until late at night. The Vassar girl who worked beside her in the marble building downtown had a fiancé in France, too, in the flying corps. But she went out to St. Mark's of an evening or to the Knickerbocker or the movies with many different officers.

Was she herself making a mistake to shut her life up like a cocoon waiting to burst forth only for David? When she had not heard from him in months and might never hear again? When she might have simply given up Forrester—and enjoyed herself the rest of the time.

She gazed doubtfully upon the idea for two brief evenings while she went to the Washington Roof with new acquaintances. And then she shook off the temptation forever. No, she decided, it was like those moments she sometimes still had at night when the memory of Forrester's passionate embrace assailed her like a nostalgia—those moments when she grew hot with shame at the sudden realization that she could still wish for the ecstasy of the imps of passion after all that had happened, after all her resolutions. It was but another device of the imps to win her away from her decision.

She would not do it.

She was winning engagement after engagement from the imps, indeed, had she known it, as the breathless Southern summer came on and her hope of hearing from David faded week by week. It was curious how that fading hope seemed only to make her more determined than ever to be all that he

would want her. Like some invitation to passion, the imps might try to make the life around her appear, as they held open to her little glimpses of the roof gardens at night, with the orchestras playing and youth looking at her with inviting eyes—as they gave her tiny peeps into Peacock Alley late afternoons, with youth in khaki smiling and sighing for romance; or brief glimpses of the graying sidewalks at dusk, filled with smiling officers and coquetting girls while the lamps of evening began to paint golden splashes on the darkening canvas of the avenues and streets. They might do all that, indeed, but they could not draw her from her path now.

It was the little "Line-a-Day" book that she kept that first spread dismay among them as she wrote every night in it to David. She put all her contrition and love into that little diary so that when the day came she could hand it to David and he would understand. And the imps read it and raged. They knew they had lost her forever, perhaps, when midsummer came and she took those long walks in the hot evenings, her eyes on the stars—those same stars that looked down on David! No imp could prevail against steadfastness like that—steadfastness that looked neither to the right nor the left, and passed the world by in utter forgetfulness. Sundays, it was St. Gaudens that saved her, as she sat on the little circular marble bench before the statue to Mrs. Adams and read those poems of John Masefield's she loved best. A girl with golden-gray eyes in which a little mist had gathered staring at the changing mystery of that carved woman of stone, while the squirrels played confidingly at her feet.

That was Nancy. . . .

It was mid-August before Preck called her up one day, in the stifling room where she worked, and

told her he had news of David. Her heart almost stopped at that.

"Is he all right?" she asked at once.

"Oh, yes," Preck assured her.

David had sailed two weeks before, he told her at lunch while she tried to eat and failed. The records had come through, and David's name was on them. A captain in the medical corps, it said.

She took her way back to the marble building, then, a queer ache in her throat and a tiny feeling of thankfulness in her heart. Well, he was all right, so far, anyway. Perhaps he would get across safely. She did not try to stretch her courage beyond that. The medical corps wasn't dangerous, she tried to tell herself. Château-Thierry would not be repeated. David would come through safely. . . . Until she herself got across, anyhow, and found him. . . .

It was just two weeks later that her own chance came. Report on Fourth Avenue in New York in one week, the Red Cross notice said. . . .

She realized her selfishness once more as she stared at that notice by the old-fashioned carved desk with the green blotter where she wrote every night. Over six months it was now since she had left Morpeth Terrace—and she had never written her father but that one letter. Pride had not wanted her to write more until she knew her secret was safe. That was the reason, of course. But her secret was not safe yet. Would it ever be? Even if she went abroad—and came back? Or did not come back? And meanwhile he sat alone in that library night after night, cold emptiness in his heart. How could she have overlooked the crying tragedy of his loneliness all these years? This feeling she had for David must be comparable to what he had felt the night her mother left him—and through all the years

since. Apparently he had never tried to make a friend again.

It was the picture of her father, indeed, sitting alone in the library reading, with that grim look around his mouth, that decided her finally. Yes, she could be of some help to him for once in her life—and go home for the week and see him.

She found him opening the evening papers two days later, as she came through the broad hall and into the dim library. She had time for only a hurried impression that he looked older somehow, that the lines were deeper on his leather-like face—before he saw her, and put down the paper slowly.

"Well," he said. "I thought you were dead."

"No," she answered. "Just selfish."

He stared at her a long time at that. And then he put down the papers slowly and turned to the humidor.

"Um," he said, as he took out a cigar.

But she took a swift step toward him, her eyes a trifle misty, and put her hand over his.

"Kiss me first," she said.

For a moment he looked at her. And then he kissed her.

"What's the matter?" he inquired with odd jocularity. "Want a million?"

"No," she said.

"Well," he said. "Where you been—and why are you here?"

He sat down in his favourite chair by the Persian lamp where the vivid bindings of the books showed in the dapple of light the lamp cast.

"I came home to see you because I'm going to France next week," she said.

His eyes showed his astonishment. But he did not betray it otherwise.

"Taken in by all this bunk about making the world safe for democracy?" he inquired.

"Perhaps," she answered.

"Wilson must think he's Jesus Christ," he remarked grimly.

"David sailed two weeks ago. I want to go, too."

"Oh," he said. "That's the nigger, eh?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Where you been?"

"Washington," she told him.

"Why didn't you write me?"

"I came home to tell you why," she said unwaveringly.

"Well," he invited. . . .

Well, she told him then, a little doubtfully at first, and then unrestrainedly, as the loneliness of the months came to her tongue, and all the bungle she had made of her life rose up before her. Just once did Andrew Van Wyck interrupt, and that was when Forrester Stone was mentioned. And then granite silence came to him. A long time he stared at her, too, in the silent library after she had finished.

"You don't remember your mother, do you, Nan?" he asked her then with odd hesitation.

"No," she answered.

"She did what you—didn't do," he said. He hesitated an instant, and then fell silent once more. It was noticeable that he did not condemn her.

"What you been doing for money?" he inquired.

"David gave me his when he left," she said, little drops of water gathering in her eyes.

"Humph," said Mr. Van Wyck. "By God," he added.

He poured himself a little drink of water from the high silver carafe beside him and drank it. But his voice sounded a little unsteady even then as he rose.

"Well," he said. "Let's go in to dinner. Minnie's out."

It was not until they came back together from the theatre that Nancy really knew what her father thought. He stood in the doorway of her old room, then, pulling on his cigar, looking around.

"It's just as you left it," he said gruffly. "You know"—he stared at his cigar as if there were something radically wrong with it—"you know I was never sure I treated you just right. I never could tell about you. Never knew what you thought. But I guess I was wrong. You've turned out all right. The way—your mother might have if I'd been like your—man——"

It was as far as he got, however. Because Nancy had reached him by that time and he had no opportunity. Her embrace was too tight. . . .

It was thus that Aunt Minnie found them as she ascended the stairs.

"Well," she exclaimed. "My word!"

But Andrew Van Wyck forestalled her at once.

"Get the hell out of here, Min," he said. "She's my daughter."

CHAPTER XVII

In Which Nancy Fights a Battle Alone and Gets a Glimpse of David's Vision

It was a very queer Nancy who sailed from New York three weeks later, on a rusty gray-and-green camouflaged French steamer bound for Bordeaux. Like a ghost of some kind, the sense of the past had dogged her every footstep in Clewesbury, sitting by her elbow as she drove downtown days with her father, ascending the stairs with her to her old bedroom at night, calling to her to look out over the garden in the moonlight—to look at the pergola, and the poplars, and the hollyhocks standing like ghosts at the foot of the garden. That was where she and David had sat that first night when they had come home from the club. That was where they had sat many times through all the evenings of the passionate summer. How unchanged was this garden, under the moon, beside the palace of shadows!

Only she was changed, and alone in this blue bedroom where the bumble bees had been wont to bump their faces foolishly against the screens.

That sense of the past had been with her through all the evenings she had spent with her father in the library and at the theatres. He went every night, now! It had been with her, too, a thousandfold stronger, after that visit she made to the Fitzhugh Street house when she read David's queer, jerky letters from the Southern camp to the two fading

old ladies in the old-fashioned house of steep stairs. Attached to the field hospital of his brigade—that was the only real fact of importance in them all. Apparently he had not known when he was sailing until the moment had come, and the division had gone. And there had not been a word about her in them all!

She had broken down a little then—and told Aunt Susan what had happened while the soft-voiced old lady had sat in mouselike silence, nodding her head occasionally, and had shut the door on Aunt Hat finally and announced in her quiet way that David ought to be told—and she would tell him. And why hadn't she told her that morning in the winter? Though, of course, it was too late to discuss that now. And why didn't she write to David now that she had his army address, care of the American Expeditionary Forces?

Nancy wrote him then—a short, odd little note, in the Morpeth Terrace house. He might not want her now, of course. She might be presuming. She could not tell him everything in a letter. But she was sending him the "Line-a-Day" book she had kept in Washington. And that would tell him a great deal. And she was coming to France to see him—if he wanted to see her. . . . And there really had been a reason—and she would never love any one but him. . . . And wouldn't he write to her to the Place de la Concorde where the Red Cross headquarters were?

She had posted that letter and package with a silent little prayer that no submarine would sink the ship they crossed on, and had gone on with odd defiance to the meeting at the Babies' Aid Society and faced Kitty Sassoon without flinching. Just a cool nod there had been between them as she had waited for Kitty to open fire. But Kitty had said nothing.

Forrester had not been in Clewesbury in months,

she learned, casually, at the meeting. He wasn't needed for United Clothing just now, her father told her at dinner—the common stock was rising to unprecedented high levels, and the dividends would be large. Stone was devoting most of his time to Dainger's international interests and a drive against labour as soon as the war was over and unemployment and reaction made the circumstance favourable. Though he understood the propaganda branch of the Intelligence had repeatedly offered him a commission and there was a chance he had taken it. He himself had not heard from him in some six weeks.

Dunstan was running the Brotherhood House.

That information had given her a queer assortment of feelings. She had stolen down to Kerrigan Street one afternoon, to see how old John was keeping the Pirate Cat, and had not been able to resist the impulse to climb the stairs to the apartment and see if Doctor Dunstan was in. He had been out, luckily, and she had stood in the doorway staring at the familiar rooms until she could bear it no longer, and had gone downstairs again to Annie and the study. That same study where David had stood by the dark wood table, in the silent midnight, and read her letters!

Yes, the Pirate Cat was all right, and old John had not changed—nor Annie. And they had plied her with questions. Where was the doctor and what was he doing, and was he coming back when the war was over? And wasn't it hard on the poor wives, this terrible war . . . And had she heard that Fechter——

She had stayed until after six o'clock and had come back to Morpeth Terrace, her eyes full of unshed tears. It had been so plain, somehow, that she had been her own worst enemy, that she had been utterly selfish, that even at the end she had merely run away from it all, without facing Forrester, without putting anything to the test. Just lack of will and character to control

the strength of her passions—that was what it had been from the beginning.

Personality merged into passion for her and always would. She could have no intimate men friends if she wanted David. That was the truth for her and she had chosen to ignore it, to build a wall about the subject of sex, to make a barrier between them, when they should have been passionate comrades, each protecting the other, building a little haven of loyalty and security in a world of tumultuous currents. She had not understood that emotion flowed like a tide through all humanity—a tiny trickle in some, a mighty surging stream in others; barely moving in the clod; making mad the beast; sweeping along like a torrent in the great figures of mankind, urging them to fine heights or corresponding depths; present in the saint and the courtesan, the genius and the drunkard, the conqueror and the artist, gracing dull clay with the shining flower of personality and magnetism or the muddy weeds of sensuality and lasciviousness according to the character God gave and man used. . . .

She had not understood that, because she had thought herself different from other people.

And so had done as she felt.

The thing came home to her with unforgettable force as she stood by the aft rail and watched Sandy Hook fade behind, and the two destroyers beside them cut and slashed the slate-coloured seas. Would David ever be able to understand that, she wondered?

Endless rain on a white-crested ocean of gray; a dirty gray-green ship sliding and rolling on tossing hills of slate-coloured sea; gray dusk melting into darkness—and then total, complete, almost tangible blackness on a swaying deck. Mystery in the deck chairs to right and left; mystery in the endless tramp of feet somewhere up and down the ship; mystery in the endless

mournful singing of soldiers on an invisible steerage deck.

"Zin!" "Zin!" "Zin!"

And the sudden swish and swirl of spray as the ship buffeted unseen, crashing waves. . . .

That was always her remembrance of her first night at sea, after the destroyers turned back and disappeared and the ship plunged ahead into the night alone. Voices emerging from the pitch-black saloon door beside her chair: French, sometimes; Polish, oftener; American usually; occasional laughter from down the deck—followed by tense silence, filled only by the beat of engines in the gaps between the crashing of spray. And then the thought:

"How far the sound of those engines must carry!"

She thought of that irresistibly about eleven o'clock as she closed the door behind her by the grand staircase and the blaze of light rushed at her, illuminating the heaps of duffel bags and dossiers that filled all the corners of the red-plush seats. And then she put it behind her resolutely. Only God could decide what the fate of this ship would be, with its cargo of human beings—American recruited Polish regiments, Czech regiments, American officers, French officers, nurses, Red Cross officers, Y. M. C. A. men. There could not be much danger to-night since the destroyers had turned back. What use was there in fear?

She went down the staircase to her stateroom, through thewet halls, a little sickish at the smell of damp carpet and wet rubber flooring that assailed her as she turned in at her latticed door, and turned on the light in the narrow cell-like space. Miss Dailey apparently was preferring the night on deck—or else could not bring herself to abandon the air and sense of security of the deck. How could the Germans have had the heart to add submarines to seasickness? . . . No chance down here if the ship should be submarined.

Only death in the narrow iron berth or in the choking passageways. The deck would be little better, either, in this sea and darkness, with three thousand Polish and Czech soldiers from Chicago and Clewesbury ready to seize the piled-up life rafts and boats that cluttered the top deck.

Funny, she had thought she heard one of the Polish officers speak of Pollock's bar.

What a mixed-up, topsy-turvy world it had become!

She sat down on her small oblong trunk undecided whether to undress or not in this hurly-burly, staring with frank distaste at her stout boots and dark uniform. And then she shrugged her shoulders. Well, if anything happened one might as well drown in comfort, pleasantly warm in a berth. She might as well undress and if disaster came never leave the cabin again. That was the only way to look at that.

The thought brought with it a sense of detachment, as she turned out the light and lay staring at the white-painted steel beams and rivets over her head. Clewesbury seemed of another world lying here. Had the war really touched it? Her father and his associates pursued their businesses and perfected their political organizations and financial plans just as before.

And yet they were not all of Clewesbury. More than twenty thousand young men had marched from Cuyahoga Avenue since that day when she and David had seen the National Guard regiments marching away in the rain. Their families must be the real Clewesbury of which she knew nothing and never would know anything—the Clewesbury which had the real patriotism because it had not yet substituted the dollar sign for character.

Her father, of course, only considered the war as an interesting variation of the financial game.

But surely all these thousands of men in the great camps all over the country, the adventurous humanity

on this ship were not looking at it that way. Youth and the great adventure, that was the way many looked at it, of course. That had been an irresistible conclusion as she had watched the regiments entraining in the Pennsylvania station in New York these last weeks and heard them singing, "The Old Family Toothbrush that Lay in the Sink!" But behind their youth, nevertheless, lay a devotion to that ideal of democracy which the man in the White House had expressed in words that roused echoes in every man's heart. Yes, the occasion might be the submarine sinkings, but the cause was the cause of democracy—the war a war to end war.

It was odd that her father did not seem to feel that at all; that she herself had never felt it until she had gone to Washington. Why was that?

What a self-centred person she had been in that apartment on Kerrigan Street! Why, the world could have blown up under her before she would have known that any one had lighted the fuse. Much of America still impressed her that way. It would never wake up until the war really came home to it and smashed its houses and ruined its fortunes and killed its sons. And it hardly seemed as if that could happen now, with so many millions of American troops hurrying to France; and Château-Thierry and Soissons and Rheims a thing of the past; and Germany in slow but certain retreat. . . .

She awoke to clear, pale sunlight and a rough, high-running sea that held a thousand colours of slate; and sought the boat deck for a quiet place to study French.

A half hour to study, a half hour to recite to herself; five minutes watching the sea gulls and the interminable break of the wave crests, and then on to the next lesson until lunch time. That was her morning! Then a half hour in the gilt-and-red-plush dining saloon

amid the chatter of nurses and the loud laughter of the tableful of Polish officers with their strangely Teutonic faces; and then up once more to the seat on the after boat deck where the funnels sheltered one a bit from the damp wind, and the jungle of life rafts and rope coils and extra lifeboats afforded a certain privacy. That was her afternoon. Then came dusk and the hour for supper in the brightly lit dining saloon where the two social service workers from Chicago commented ironically on the service, the wine, the officers, the smells, the stewards, the war, the Red Cross, the passport bureau, the French Consulate, the Germans, the submarines, the captain, the ship's course, the boat drills, the Neversinks, the nurses, and the susceptibility of man. Two hours of utter darkness in the deck chair, then, by the smoking room—and then bed in the damp berth where cigarette smoke mixed with the sweet, sickish smell of the passageways and stateroom.

That was the passage across the Atlantic to Nancy, as the slate-coloured sea changed to brick dusty sunsets across long lanes of molten iron and the Spanish coast approached.

She made some friends, of course—the grizzled, brown-faced old Frenchman with the mild brown eyes who strode the deck unnoticed for some time until a gust of wind blew aside his long cape and disclosed the uniform of a Colonel of Chasseurs d'Afrique and seven medals and the Croix de Guerre; the Red Cross officer with the deep blue eyes—Oh, so like David's!—and the gray hair, and the estate in Massachusetts and the wheat farm in Saskatchewan, making his fourth trip across the sub-infested ocean, bringing agricultural experts for the hospital farms around Bordeaux; the girl from Chicago, just married to her dapper Captain of French Artillery, and wondering how she would like the family in the tiny château in central France;

the American lieutenant in the Intelligence, proud of his position as professor of French in his Iowa college and hoping to be personal liaison officer between Foch and G. H. Q.—but doomed, alas, to disappointment! She grew to know them quite well. The lieutenant, indeed, made violent love to her the first afternoon on the aft deck seat until she told him quietly and yet with a certain amusement that she was old enough to be his grandmother.

It was the episode of the lieutenant, perhaps, that made her realize toward the end of the voyage how much she had really changed. Once, indeed, she would have considered this whole voyage and ships company as only the stage setting for conquest. She would not have rested until she had captured and held enthralled the youthful Polish Colonel with his air of being a mediæval prince, striding down the deck in gray-blue and crimson with his officers close behind him. And now she had not even looked at him. Yes, she could get him, if she wished. But at what cost to herself and David and happiness and loyalty!

Her enemy was plain, now, where through all the years of youth and childhood it had hid behind a thousand disguises, played her a thousand tricks to conceal its real nature.

That was the one thought that held her as the Spanish coast approached, and the steamer lay still many times at night; and then a French destroyer and two sea planes sighted them and the ship's company sighed with relief. Like an unreal journey through futurist land the early-morning ride up the Loire under the brilliant moon seemed, the yellow sand bars and the slipping river, the silent ships and black barges seen through the gray, murky mist of the moonlight as the tide came in and the ship sailed up the broad stream.

She stayed up all night to see that—the camouflaged ships and the lapping stream, the endless arc lights and

docks and railway cars, the tracks and travelling cranes. But not until the orange moon sank low behind the gray stone houses of Bordeaux, and dawn stole along the cobblestone quays, in and out the shipping, and a file of helmeted soldiers in horizon blue, escorting a squad of greenish-gray clad labourers with Teutonic faces, drew up to salute the disembarking Polish regiment—not until then did she realize she was actually in France. And go below decks to pack her simple luggage.

It was mid-October by the time she reached the stone hospital in Neuilly on the Seine, just outside of Paris—that October that saw America struggling heroically through the tangled, high-crested Argonne woods toward Sedan while the lines of battle swept steadily north and east along the French and British fronts. She had spent many days in Paris, at the Prefecture of Police, at the photographer's in the little street by the Ile de Paris—she had lost her identification pictures—and in the big stone hotel on the Rue de Rivoli waiting for her assignment, while the sense of victory grew in the dim, blue-lighted Parisian streets and there began to pour into the Place de la Concorde and the Champs Élysées the captured artillery of the Germans. But she had not heard from David and she was beginning to fear that she would not. France seemed so large, so impossible to move in. There were so many miles of red tape about every step; travelling was so uncertain and impossible without military orders; and how was she to get those even if she found out where David was?

Once, indeed, she had felt like breaking down and giving up. That was when she found in the photographer's shop that one could not leave Paris except by order of the American Military Police.

But the everlasting need for every hand had caught her up again almost immediately after that, and she had gone to the hospital in Neuilly to wash floors

and take temperatures and give baths and change sheets with a great sense of relief, of being worth while, of doing something at last. The cretonnes in the reception room and in her own tiny room with the cot had helped, too—until the uncomplaining cheerfulness of the wounded had shamed her and brought her heart to her throat.

"I've handled over a thousand cases of our own boys now," the nurse over her told her as they sat in the hall. "And I've yet to see one that wasn't uncomplaining and cheerful next morning. Like a picnic the wards were after Château-Thierry, with the boys asking each other where they got theirs! Along the railroad or by the bridge or along the bank. A picnic except when they came to be moved. You've got to ride in a camion to realize why they wanted to die rather than to be moved in those stretchers and taken away. No one knows what boys we've got except some of us that have been at the Hôtel de Dieu and Bar-le-Duc and Evacuation Three."

The everlasting spirit of the wounded caught her up then so that she ceased to mind the days of endless rain and mud, the physical weariness that came to her as she tried to do unaccustomed tasks, the icy dampness of her room, the little lump that seemed to stay permanently in her throat now whenever she thought of David. These men about her—they were the spirit of the war.

She could be as uncomplaining and patient as they, at least.

Complete realization of her own littleness and selfishness came to her, a month later, when mid-November had come and she was out of the hospital and attached to her Red Cross ambulance convoy.

She never forgot, indeed, the way her own personal drama dwindled away beside the immense tragedy which that ride of hers to join the Second Division

visualized. She sat with a nurse and the driver on the front seat of her ambulance, and saw the panorama unroll hour after hour, through glinting sunlight and gray, misty dusk, through rainy darkness and cold midnight; the lights of the car swinging their beams through smashed villages and ruined towns; catching sometimes on the hills and muddy trenches beside the road; sometimes lighting up the dismal, flapping camouflage overhead, enhancing the effect of ghostly despair which the riddled, blasted trees and whole incredible landscape produced. The riddled garden walls of Dormans, the shell gaps at regular intervals along the road, the splintered trees and smashed houses and pierced town, and over the river the hills looming in the darkness; the gaping convent attic in Epernay where she slept on the muddy floor, and crept out at dawn to eat black bread and drink cheap wine with the French poilus in the ruined cellar across the street; the rainy, muddy streets of Châlons and the endless high, rolling Champagne plains where the crows flapped in the cold trees beside the hangars and the endless columns of trudging French soldiers stood aside for the pounding camions—that was her first glimpse of the panorama.

She struck the American Army, then—mess kitchens busily at work in old stables in the stone French villages, under the flaring lights; huge American trucks rushing blackly out of the dusk, their great headlights blinding the road; long, sloping, muddy hills covered with tumbling ruins; and double-banked along the road, reaching back into muddy orchards, the endless trucks and tractors and motors and caterpillars of the Yankee divisions, sliding and grinding in the garish, thick, shining mud, while in every smashed doorway or half-boarded window the khaki uniforms of Americans appeared.

Unforgettable, that lump that came in her throat as

complete darkness fell, and her ambulance lumbered forward toward Verdun almost alone; far ahead the lights of another ambulance, and far behind, appearing only on the straight stretches, the lights of another. Like some ghostly subway placed on the tree-lined roadway, the tunnel of fog through which they drove seemed, with, away to the north, abrupt green flares lighting the black sky occasionally, and beside them great looming hillsides and blinking, mysterious camps. Absolutely alone she felt, for an instant—and then around an abrupt corner she came upon a marching regiment and a band playing in the darkness! And the tune was "See, the Conquering Hero!"

Like a sudden glimpse of Decoration Day, back home in Clewesbury, the melody was—a glimpse of the Civil War veterans, and the lines and lines of public-school boys in their uniforms, the Spanish War veterans, and the naval brigade, and then the Knights of Columbus and all the gaily dressed companies of the fraternal organizations! Home, and the past, and youth in Clewesbury suddenly here in the French rain, out in the darkness. Who could be alone with that high, familiar chorus sounding from the night?

The emotion of the thing held her hour after hour as she tried to sleep, and the nurse beside her leaned more and more heavily upon her, and the lean-faced boy from California who drove swore softly as his lights failed gradually and the road grew darker. She must have fallen into a doze, nevertheless, because she did not realize they were approaching anything until directly before her, of a sudden, loomed the great, high, ancient gateway into Verdun and she saw the monstrous bastioned walls of the city dim against the night sky.

She sat up, almost frightened at the weirdness of that entry. Before her slept a ghostly, shattered city. Street after street of high stone houses, their hanging

blinds and torn floors speaking of the agony of shell fire! Side street after side street where rose great barricades of rubbish, blocking all progress. And only at the corner of the Rue Etain, where three doughboys sat in a ruined corner house open now to the sky, gazing into the red blaze of a fire—only there any sign of life. About them lay the city beneath the November raincloud—silent, abandoned, murdered.

She never forgot the impression of war which that gave her, limned and framed for her forever as it was by the rest of that ride to Luxembourg—the pale dawn on the Hindenburg line, the water-filled shellholes, the crashing ruins of Etain, the twisted, gaunt tanks on the crests of the desolate slopes, and then the confusion of the German retreat. The rain pouring on the endless wire entanglements, the vast piles of grenades and shells and litter of every description, the prison camps with the potato peelings still fresh in the barrels, the litters of filth and muddy rags still on the tiers of bunks, and in the doorway of a staring smashed stone cottage in Audun three pale, small children crouching in the rain.

This was tragedy, she felt of a sudden. Just tragedy—the unforgettable picture of what brutal selfishness could do on a grand scale. This was what David had meant when he had said that. It was the goal to which uncontrolled, brutal self-seeking would always lead, whether in Clewesbury or Berlin, in Kerrigan Street or Verdun. Whether expressed by Deutschland Über Alles or Rule Britannia or America First or Nothing to Discuss!

This was what David was trying to fight, and had always felt as his enemy.

This was Evil. . . .

I doubt if any one would have guessed her thoughts, that night, however, as she got down from the am-

bulance in the dark of the Luxembourg streets and went stiffly up the steps of the Hotel Brasseur into the pleasant glow of the lobby. Just a tired, bedraggled American girl in a dark-blue uniform, she appeared—a girl who had gone forty-eight hours without sleep, and had dark circles beneath her steady gray eyes.

Could there have been a worse moment for that inevitable meeting with Forrester Stone?

And yet——

He was standing directly by the entrance to the dining room, and he recognized her immediately.

Just a second it took him to cross the lobby, despite his stunned surprise, and touch her on the sleeve.

"Nancy!" he exclaimed.

She did not know him in his Major's uniform—for an instant. And then she held out her hand.

"Why, hello, Forrester," she said, oddly tremulous.

"Nan!" he repeated. "I—I can hardly believe it," he stammered. "Are you—have you——" It was the only time in the Man of Destiny's existence, perhaps, that he was ever at a loss. "Have you had dinner?" he managed to get out finally.

"Why, no," she told him, with hastily summoned self-assurance, "though I propose to eat all Luxembourg out of house and home."

"I've just ordered," he said. Her matter-of-fact humour seemed to brace him up like a cool breeze. "But won't you have your dinner with me?"

"I don't see why not," she replied. There was no reason, indeed, why she should not treat him as an ordinary friend.

"Then we will," he finished.

A curious trembling in him, indeed, that he could not control at this new sight of her after all the months. Didn't she feel it, too, despite the fact that she acted as if he were just an ordinary acquaintance whom she was glad to see in a foreign city?

Did she not remember that the last time he had seen her had been on the eve of an elopement, before Kitty's angry eyes, in that distant Brotherhood study? Good God, how distant it all seemed.

"What luck to run on you!" he exclaimed.

He could not keep his eyes from her changed appearance. Gray eyes that were steady, and not golden or impish; cheeks that were sweet and pale, and not curved and inviting; and an expression about her mouth that made his heart contract just a little. What had been happening to her?

"I never knew what you thought, you know," he stammered finally, when he saw she was not going to bring up the subject. His voice was quite low. "I never heard from you—never saw you, couldn't find you. Just a complete disappearance after I tried to end the thing for us all."

"I thought that was what you would call it," she said slowly. She made no effort to dodge the issue.

"But what happened?" he asked. He could not help it. Why was she over here in this Red Cross uniform? How had she gotten here? What had happened to David? And—well, had he succeeded or had he failed? A matter of endless self-questioning and wondering and doubt, the thing had been to him, ever since he had 'phoned the Brotherhood House that next noon and had gotten no answer and had gone down there ostensibly to see Dunstan at night and had heard the stunning news that both the Carpenters had gone for good. He had not even known whether they had gone together or not! And old Van Wyck had maintained that stony silence of his—and he himself had never known. . . .

In the pleasant Hotel Brasseur dining room he told her all that in a curiously apologetic tone while he kept his eyes on the table.

"Why, I went to find David," she told him simply, at once.

"And did not give a thought to me?" he asked.

"No," she said slowly.

She put out her hand swiftly the instant she had said it, too, because his hurt was so evident.

"Because I couldn't, Forr," she said. "I—I'm sorry. I knew it the minute I got his note—I knew it before that—down in the study. When I couldn't leave him."

"But he had gone then," cried Forrester Stone. "I mean when you got his note."

"That only made me all the surer," she said. Her eyes sought the table, too, and she hesitated. "Something happened to me," she said. "I don't know what. I saw—things—somehow. I was mean to you, of course. But it wasn't because I wanted to be. It was because I was afraid to be anything else."

"And you haven't heard from David?"

"No," she told him.

He did not press the question. Because it did not make any difference, he realized abruptly. Because he had lost! Because she would rather have just the chance of David than the surety of himself. What a staggering thought that was, showing once more the inexplicability of women! To prefer life with that no-good-doctor to climbing the heights with him! Why, the immense field for his business which this war and the wave of goodwill for America in all lands was about to open made his future boundless. Whether this league of nations which they wrestled with in Paris became a fact or not, public opinion was going to be the battleground of the world from now on. Democracy and newspapers and publicity! His own chosen career. He could add the rest of the world to his dream of influencing public opinion in America. Whoever

controlled the press and the news of the world would be its Bismarck in this era just opening!

Why should that not be he?

The dream fired him a little all over again, even in the small Luxembourg hotel.

"Better think it over carefully, Nan," he told her quietly. "And consider what I can offer you."

"I'm not in the market," she checked him at once.

"Well, we'll talk it over in the morning, then," he finished. "You must be nearly dead."

"I am," she admitted. "It's my first bed in three nights."

"Let's say good-night, then," he told her. "And I'll see you in the morning."

"Yes," she said pleasantly.

CHAPTER XVIII

In Which the Imps of Conquest Receive Their Dismissal and David Gets a Surprise

He tried to bring up the subject again in the morning, of course, as she drove with him in his G. H .Q. Cadillac all the way from the Hotel Brasseur to Coblenz. She refused to discuss it.

Afterward, indeed, she realized that she had hardly heard the stories of wine suppers and dances in Paris to which he treated her in a half-resentful attempt to rouse her old, passionate self. Nor had his hopes and dreams of the future, with all they could mean to her, made any impression on her. She was only looking with searching gray eyes at every detachment of the medical corps they passed.

Wasn't it barely possible she might see David when she had this opportunity to pass so many thousands upon thousands of men?

That was the question uppermost in her mind, during all the day's ride to Cochem, until they got their billets from the weary Town Major in the Platz, climbed the narrow streets to Ober Bach Strasse and their rooms over the shop, and then spent the evening in the Gashaus by the rushing Moselle; sitting in the dimly lighted room beside the red cloth-covered tables, touching the old, thin-toned piano, listening to the landlord talk of *Die Amerikaner* and the revolution, and *Die arme Leute*, promised victory and then deceived. The *Lusitania?* Ah, yes, a mistake—they should have won had it not been for that

—a mistake in judgment. Even now they were not beaten. No German army could be beaten. They had but tired of the war. Let everyone stop making wars now. Were they not all democrats together?

"Because they are sick of it!" Forrester exclaimed grimly to Nancy as they climbed the hilly streets to Ober Bach Strasse and stood before the shop.

"Yes," said Nancy.

"Sick of the Kaiser only because he didn't win!" added Forrester.

"Yes," said Nancy. "And just as brutally selfish as before."

She went to bed in her dim attic with that thought, vaguely thankful for the irresistible wave of disgust for Germany which seemed to be sweeping higher and higher through the American Army as it marched farther and farther down the Moselle toward the Rhine. Even Forrester was not immune from the contagion of that—and it gave her a little respite from his pleading, it took his mind and hers off the moment when they would have to part and their own feelings would be the only thing they could think of.

Saying good-bye to romance and youth, as well as to the imps of conquest—that was what saying good-bye forever to Forrester would be for her. There would be only the future of steadfastness and conscience left to her—no dallying with imps at tea dances, at amateur theatricals, under the pergola at Morpeth Terrace beneath the moon. None of the colour of exquisite emotion and adventure! Only the search for David, and if she never found him, the happiness of unselfishness.

Yes, the end of adventure, of that sort of adventure, anyway. That was what it would be.

The emotion held her strongly all through those last hours she spent with Forrester, as they left be-

hind them Cochem with its steep streets and frowning castle, its pleasant view of the vineyard-covered hills, gray with slate, violet with earth, and swung swiftly toward the Rhine, past the blazing red of the mess kitchens in the sudden dusk; past the endless lines of the cavalry horses in their neat light blankets, standing along the pebbled river shores, heads inward, eating; past shadowed ancient courtyards where boys in khaki handled mess kits and split wood—and came at last to the silent, black flowing Rhine taking its ancient way past Coblenz and the brightly lighted Kurfurster Hotel, outpost of the untouched, brilliant German city.

Just a glimpse she had of recollection—of those three pale-faced children in the dripping doorway in ruined Audun, of the ghostly, shattered streets of Verdun, sad contrast to this untouched Germany of street cars and electric lights!—and then her own drama shut out the war and she knew the moment had come for her to say good-bye to Forrester.

"It's been a very pleasant meeting," she said to him, outside the gray structure which was to be her home as long as her unit stayed with the army.

"Yes," he said in a low voice.

"Good-bye," she said.

Final desperation came to him.

"It doesn't have to be good-bye," he said. "I will be here several days more—I can see you. There's no reason against that."

"Yes, there is," she said steadfastly.

"I don't see why."

"Because I can't see you," she said gently.

"It's silly."

"Not now, Forr," she said. "I can't have friends like you—and—and face David. I—I like you too well. That is the truth. What it might have been had David never been—I don't know. I hate some-

times to think. I might have loved you—if passion is love. But not now."

"It's madness," he said. "Just for an idea, Nan——"

"That's all life is," she interrupted him. "Fine ideas—and holding loyally to them. There isn't anything else." There was nothing else, she knew now, riches, power, ambition, passion—none of these had made her father or Forrester or herself happy. Nothing but fine ideas and holding loyally to them did make people happy. Life had taught her that, the only true philosophy of life was unselfishness—losing one's life in order to find it. All else was but the sowing of the wind—vanity, and as blowing wind. Tears came into her eyes and she turned away lest he see them. "I don't know why life was made that way—why we were ever made so mad! But there is nothing else." The spell of the past came over her of a sudden. "I've been endlessly unfair to you—and David, and everyone. I hope you can blot me out of your life forever the minute you have turned the corner of the hotel. I'm sorry for all that." She twisted her hands a little in the darkness. "Kiss me good-bye."

He took her in his arms at once.

"Not good-bye," he said fiercely. "Not that."

She did not struggle.

"Yes," she said. "Don't make it harder for me. You love me enough to say good-bye."

An instant he hesitated. And then his arms fell limp.

"All right," he said slowly. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she repeated. . . .

And she kissed him and ran up the stone steps into her hotel, a sudden torrent of regret filling her soul, all the anguish of the months crystallized into one poignant pang. The end of adventure, and the end

of everything! Yes, that was what this farewell was. Mere fortune, that she had run on to Forrester in this great maelstrom of armies that swept Europe! Fortune, resulting from this march into Germany. She might seek David for years and never find him, even if he stayed in France, even if he were already slated for home, even if nothing had happened to him.

And she had no guarantee of that.

The tangled woods of the Argonne might keep that secret forever.

And her life would end where it began—alone.

Could she ever face that?

In the darkness of her strange bedroom she buried her face in the old feather bed.

Well, she would have to try.

During all those two months she stayed in Coblenz, indeed, I doubt if she ever considered her future as anything except a matter of finding David. That she might find him and still be no farther on her road to happiness could never have occurred to her. No, the question was merely: would she find him? She was as certain of that in the last day of the two months as she was on the first.

Afterward, she could never help reflecting whimsically how closely that very hour must have coincided with the moment that David opened a certain package in his room in the Ritz Carlton at Cannes, on the shores of the Mediterranean in southern France. Facing the sea his room was, and the promenade, where girls in white serge carried golf clubs and tennis racquets in pleasant anticipation, where American officers strolled, completing the romance of ten days' leave in Nice and the Riviera. Across the circle of the bay the blue-and-purple mountains encircled the sunlit Mediterranean waters. Up and down the esplanade of palms the khaki-clad doughboy strolled. By the Casino the band played

"A Baby's Prayer at Twilight" while the convalescents sang and beat time to the music. And just outside the windows sounded the soft swish and gentle breaking of the waves.

But David was not noticing or hearing any of these things. He was only holding in his hand a short note written in an unmistakable hand, and staring a little blindly at a small "Line-a-Day" book which lay in its wrappings on the table before him.

Before God, what infinite power to wound a man love gave one's beloved—power beside which that of an Alexander or a Genghis Khan shrank into insignificance! Over a year now since that moment in the study in distant Clewesbury, and yet every detail of that night, every line of those passionate letters stood out here with camera-like distinctness, brought back like a flash by the mere sight of the familiar writing on an envelope. He would never forget that. Love had died for him, in that hour, leaving in its place only sharp anguish.

What was Nancy doing to-night?

That question had been with him night after night, through all the weeks in camp, on the troopship to Liverpool, and in all the horrible nights when he had stood hour after hour, night after night, till dawn came, beside the operating table in the château where the lister bags hung on the walls. It had come to him at odd moments, indeed, ever since he had walked down Kerrigan Street in the morning mist and left Clewesbury forever. Only in these last two weeks had he thought that he was beginning to get a firm grip on the everlasting anguish of the thing.

And just this sight of her handwriting brought it all back, multiplied a thousand times—as if it had all happened but the night before.

What could she have to say to him now?

In the silence of the room he read the note carefully, little lines of skepticism showing around his tired eyes at first, but disappearing swiftly as the meaning of the thing came home to him and he leaned forward suddenly, hungrily, for the "Line-a-Day" book. Why, did she mean that she had never loved Stone, after all? That she had been but that impulsive child he had always thought her? That—that her letters had been——

Like a shadow, the thought of those letters came.

What did she mean?

It was just an hour later that he knew what she meant.

Hour after hour he sat, once he had finished that little volume of her diary, with all its glimpses of Washington and Clewesbury and its revealing flashlight on the imps of conquest and that miserable wall of silence that had stood between them through all the years of their marriage—that wall whose first stone had been laid in the Morpeth Terrace library so long ago. And hour after hour regret and self-accusation claimed him for their own more and more. . . .

He had been no help to her from the beginning—any more than if he had been an Andrew Van Wyck. He had merely married her and left her to fight out her own battle, to work out her own salvation. Instead of facing the truth with her from the start and helping her fight the battle of passion, no matter what momentary bitterness it might have cost him.

That was what they should have been from the beginning—passionate comrades. Only her own endless courage and heartbreaking battle had pulled out a victory for them in the end. For that was what this "Line-a-Day" book spelled.

Victory.

Victory instead of tragedy. She would never be

anything but tragic, of course, despite her victory. The little imps of conquest would never forsake her entirely. They would never give up hope. But they would never win if she had reinforcements always at hand, ready to stem the tide of defeat for her whenever she needed them.

He would be endlessly to blame if he did not recognize that—and give assistance to her at once. She surely had as good a claim to his loyalty as had this America for which he had just fought and would continue to fight. All over America, now, probably, the Van Wycks and Forrester Stones were organizing their corporations, strengthening their hold on political machines, building higher the bulwarks of privilege and junkerdom, scheming for tariffs and cheap labourers—raising higher and higher that image of a materialistic America which they carried in their hearts. An America of dollars alone, that cared nothing for democracy or brotherhood!

If they succeeded, too, the unselfishness of the war would become merely a flash of gold, showing what America could be but was not. The dross of materialism would overwhelm completely the brief glimpse it afforded of what humanity might be. And America would become in reality an America which considered the foreigner and the labourer only as so much cheap labour, so much of a commodity to be bought and sold—instead of as a human being, as a potential citizen, coming to join the brotherhood of democracy. It would be an America which thought only of how cheaply a ton of steel could be delivered in Hankow, China, and cared nothing for the holy dream for which the boys in the Argonne had died.

That was the fight which he would have to enter once more, once he set foot in New York again. Only some new Company of Jesus could ever successfully combat these Forrester Stones and Van Wycks—a new

brotherhood, vowed to the service of Mankind, devoted to getting the facts for intelligent unselfishness and coöperation; doing it as diligently as the enemies of society now sought selfishness and their own personal aggrandizement; standing for the ideals of Christ in industry and society, enlisting the aristocrats of achievement everywhere, and finally putting its heel on the serpent of brutal self-seeking which was the enemy of democracy.

But it did not mean that his first duty was not to Nancy. His duty, yes—and his desire. There would never be any one like her in his life. She would always stay in his heart, no matter what happened. He had known that, deep down in his soul all through the days when he had tried to tell himself that love had died. Love for her would never die.

What was it she had said her address was?

Oh, yes, the Red Cross in Paris—Place de la Concorde. Well, he would write her at once. . . .

He did write to her, too—that very night. But Nancy never got the letter. It was not because the mail service was to blame, but because she had ten days' leave herself by that time, and had left Coblenz for Paris and Cannes for ten days' blessed sleep and rest.

She had almost given up hope of finding him in Europe, too, as she sat in her railway compartment and gazed out at the hills of southern France, covered with what seemed to be sagebrush, crowned here and there by ancient watchtowers speaking of Roman days. Merely another evidence of the great welter and maelstrom of the world, this crowded train was, this landscape outside, too, with its plain reminders of Roman and Moor and Saracen, of Frenchman, Gaul, and Norman, its storied past, like Avignon, its bustling present, like Marseilles. They showed how varied and vast the world was, how difficult it could be ever

to find a human being by merely searching. That was what she was thinking.

Only through the three or four ties of affection in her life could she ever find David. Through Aunt Hat or Aunt Susan, through Preck or John Foster—that would be the way she would have to find him in the end. The conclusion held her hour after hour, as the train took its way through sunlight and spring breezes to olive trees, palms, and summer; and San Rafael gave up its green vista set before the red, volcanic hills and white, broken, distant mountains, and the road along the greenish-blue Mediterranean announced the approach of the villas and white, pleasant streets and garden-covered hills of Cannes.

She got off in the station, and arranged to have her baggage go up in the taxi while she walked the few streets to ease her weariness, rather glad that she did not know any one in the town. She could sit in the sunshine, and perhaps afterward play tennis in the courts they had assured her in Paris were behind the hotel. There would be plenty of other Red Cross girls down here now, on leave, just as she was. And surely some day David would get her letter and answer something.

That was all she was thinking as she rounded the corner by the hotel and saw the immemorial purple twilight and in the distance a galleon of dreams, drifting idly, a gray ghost fishing boat, with all sails set—drifting idly out past the shadowy shore of the bay to the Mediterranean.

And the next moment she saw David.

She knew him instantly, despite the uniform and the fact that his back was turned toward her, and that he was gazing directly away from her. And then a wave of tenderness almost engulfed her, turning her faint of a sudden, forcing her to stop. Not for her hope of Heaven could she have taken those few steps

between him and the palm tree to which she clung so faintly.

"Why, Dave," she cried, with all the clearness she could muster.

And he turned and saw her. . . .

THE END

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